

# Portland Dahlia Society Bulletin

November 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting is Virtual via Zoom

Website: portlanddahlia.com

Editor: Mike Riordan (503) 256-0425 Contacts: [thebodysmith@hotmail.com](mailto:thebodysmith@hotmail.com), Jeanette Benson (503) 649-4118

**Next meeting Tuesday, November 10th, 2020 @ 7:00 p.m.**

## MEETING INVITATION

Topic: Portland Dahlia Society November Meeting  
Time: Nov 10, 2020 07:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89844243980?pwd=b2g2TjdCYU1Fei8rNmwxSEFBdlBoQT09>

Meeting ID: 898 4424 3980

Passcode: Dahlias1!

One tap mobile

+13462487799,,89844243980#,,,,,0#,,159100565# US  
(Houston)

+16699009128,,89844243980#,,,,,0#,,159100565# US  
(San Jose)

Dial by your location

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

Meeting ID: 898 4424 3980

Passcode: 159100565

Find your local

number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kgveEB7qT>

## PROGRAM NOTES

We are planning a panel discussion on:

\*Where are the eyes on these tubers? What is Dahlia Crown Gall and how to remedy?

\* Soil prep I can do now for over winter? Cover crops? Where is Cover Crop seed available? Ok to apply lime now?

\* How do I care for clumps I intend to leave in the ground over-winter?

\* How / when to start seeds?

\* Things I should look into buying for seedlings/early starts (grow lights, heat mats,???) How to make cuttings without a greenhouse.

\* Can I pre-plant some tubers in pots for an early start? When? How do I gently transplant them?

## VIRTUAL DAHLIA SHOW RESULTS

**By Larry Smith**

At this time, I will share that Virtual Show Class 1, Fully Double, attracted 87 nice entries. In the first round of judging, I asked the judges to choose their top 10 in no particular order. No entry got a majority of votes, 20 entries received two votes each. The second round, judges were asked to pick their top three in rank order. One entry got the early votes, but three others came on strong and we went to a knockout round. The winner is Clearview Edie, shown by Gary Murphy, a short eyelash ahead of Max Ollieu's Hollyhill Goldrush. Right behind, and receiving Best Amateur Exhibit, was Beginner's Luck, shown by Linda Taylor, just ahead of Josudi Andromeda, the Best Novice Exhibit, shown by Vicki Baulig. I might add, for the experienced exhibitors, look out for Vicki, this was her first year to show dahlias and she was competitive in every class she entered. Receiving honorable Mention were:

AC Abby (Joanie Chapel)

AC Zed (Terry Smith)

Rejman's Polish Kid (Larry Smith)

Barbary Mystery (Teresa Bergman)

Hollyhill Zarina (Ted Kennedy)

Mary's Jomanda (Elva Sellens)

Thanks to all who participated and made this a great show. Many said this was a fun challenge for them and found it was nice to have "some kind of show" opportunity this year. Here are some video links:

"Artistic Categories" (Arrangements and Baskets):

<https://youtu.be/SqXDGR3vnjw>

"Fan Favorites" (Vase of Dahlias, People's Choice):

<https://youtu.be/g36ysIN8VaA>

"Dahlia Debutantes" (New Varieties, New Participants, Public Entries)  
<https://youtu.be/z9BYnOvYNks>

"Open Centered Varieties" (Disc Blooms and Micros)  
<https://youtu.be/NCXc2dV10TQ>

"Showstoppers" (Fully Double Blooms)  
<https://youtu.be/93bNoaREcm8>

## 2021 DUES ARE SOON DUE

Why not take care of this now and get it out of the way? Judges please remember that you are required to carry membership in both the American Dahlia society and the PNDC (Pacific Northwest Dahlia Conference). PDS dues, ADS dues and PNDC dues should be combined and paid to the Treasurer as noted below. Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers dues are \$10 and also payable through our Treasurer.

PDS	ADS	PNDC
Adults: \$7.00	Individual: \$24.00	Individual \$10.00
Couples: \$10.00	Family: \$27.00	Dual: \$15.00
Juniors: \$1.00	Add \$8-Snowbirds	
Mail to or pay at next meeting		
Larry Sawyer, 11015 S.W. Berkshire, Portland, OR 97225		

Here's an idea for a Christmas Gift - you can order from home...a Gift Subscription to the Portland Dahlia Society. Just the thing for that friend of yours you are just getting hooked. Simply send the \$7 extra to Larry Sawyer and include the contact information for your recipient.



*Midnight Star – Best Disc Bloom Portland  
 2019 By Deb Gilmer*

## STORING DAHLIA TUBERS

By Ted J. Kennedy

A discussion on storing dahlia tubers for the more experienced grower.

Over the years, I have seen numerous discussions on how someone successfully stored their tubers using a particular method. Then the next year or two later someone else tried this same method and it supposedly it failed for that person. I have found that there are many factors that people may overlook concerning the storage of dahlia tubers:

(1) Variety related issues; many varieties are prone to loss in storage. Barberry Bingo is a wonderful dahlia and an extremely poor keeper. Mingus Nicole is also very difficult to keep over. Why do these varieties fail to store well? They appear to make reasonably good looking tubers. It is my belief that both of them are susceptible to fungus infections that cause the tubers to rot. It may well be that the infection affects the entire plant before the tubers are dug and that very little can be done with fungicide treatments after digging and dividing. Or, maybe it is just plain bad genetics. These varieties may not have the ability to go "dormant" in storage conditions. So, when you compare storage methods one must take into consideration what varieties are being stored.

(2) Very few people talk about the actual temperature and humidity levels in their storage area. Temperature is an interesting issue. If a dahlia tuber has been properly prepared for storage, dahlias can be stored at just about any temperature above freezing. But, the storage temperature has a lot to do with the growth of insects and fungus. Insects do not generally thrive in cool temperatures. There needs to be some research done on temperature as it affects these vectors. Humidity in the storage area is also another factor that no one seems to talk about. Some areas are more humid and some climates are more humid during the winter. I know of one grower who believes his overly humid storage area causes rot and has installed a dehumidifier there. In the Northwest, more tubers are lost to too wet storage than too dry. In climates with drier winters, there may some risk of too dry tubers. All in all, a little bit of too dry is probably better than a little bit of too wet.

(3) Tubers that are not "ripe". In many show gardens, dahlias are grown with a more than an ample supply of nutrients and water. When harvest time comes in the fall, the plants are still growing and the newly formed tubers are not good candidates for storage. They can be identified by their nearly transparent skin and the fact that they are still rather skinny. Unripe dahlia tubers do not store well. They are much more susceptible to bruising and their thin skin is easily damaged by handling and cleaning. When they are mixed in with the

more mature tubers, they can spread rot to tubers nearby. If you keep these tubers, store them in a separate bag or box.

(4) Broken necks. Many dahlia varieties have thin necks where the tuber attaches to the stem. If the neck is broken when you dig tubers, the tuber may look perfectly good but a very high percentage of these tubers (90% is good estimate) will rot or fail to sprout. Many varieties are notorious for having long slender tubers that easily get broken necks. Red Velvet and Jessica are two that come to mind. When digging these very long tubers, it may be better to trim them to shorter lengths as you dig them. A tuber with about 1/3 of its length cut off will store a lot better than a long skinny tuber with a broken neck.

(5) Curing of tubers before storage. I was surfing the internet and came across an article on how potato growers prepare their tubers for storage. There are numerous steps that they go through just to get the potatoes into a dormant stage. For example during digging and hauling to the storage area, potatoes are bruised and skin is damaged. Potatoes need to have some time (two to three weeks) in reasonably warm and dry conditions to heal these defects. Then they are slowly reduced in temperature before going into storage. Do these steps apply to dahlias? I believe they do. After you harvest and divide tubers, they need to be in a special environment to heal and go into the dormant state. It should not be too humid or too dry. The tubers need to heal bruises and to have the skins thicken. When fully cured, storage success will be improved.

(6) How wet and cold is it when you are digging? In the Northwest, there may be weeks of rain during the digging season. In Montana, the humidity may be very low. Dahlias need to be handled differently in different conditions. In the Northwest, wet tuber clumps need to be divided very soon after digging. The wet tubers need to be dried before storage.



*Kelsey Radiance - Best Triple Micro Entry  
2019 By Karen Sanchez*

(7) Peat Moss, vermiculite, cedar shavings, newspaper, perforated plastic bags, small plastic bags, saran wrap,

sand, wax, saw dust, etc. Dahlias have been successfully stored in all of these mediums and probably many more. The medium itself may not be the answer but how you use the medium. No one talks much about whether tubers are stored touching each other. I believe that separation of tubers from each other is as important as the storage medium. For example, vermiculite can be used to separate the tubers in the storage container. Saran wrap and the like does the same job with much reduced storage space. Separation of tubers and the preservation of proper moisture in storage are key factors. But when using any of the storage methods, a rotten tuber can create problems for other tubers in storage. It produces excess moisture and even some gases that affect tubers in the same area. Rotten tubers probably attract insects. Rotten tubers can harbor secondary bacterial and fungus that can spread to adjacent tubers. A good practice is to check tubers in storage several times during the winter and to remove rotting tubers.

(8) Little attention is given to insect damage in storage. Very small insects such as fungus gnats and spring tails lay eggs in tubers and the larva eat tuber parts. The green eye is very susceptible to such damage. Prevention of infection is a good practice. If the weather is warm when digging, be aware of small flying insects. Do not dry tuber clumps in an area such as a greenhouse where warm dry conditions encourage insects. Using an insecticide dip may be very helpful. One grower fumigates his storage area with flea bombs.

(9) Pot tubers are insurance. Many varieties that have poor keeping tubers can be grown as "pot tubers" and stored quite successfully. Generically, a pot tuber is an entire tuber clump of a dahlia that was grown in a pot the entire year. The size of the pot can range from a gallon pot all the way down to a 2 inch pot. The bigger the pot, the bigger clump will be. Commercial entities that sell pot tubers use small pots that are in the range of 3 to 6 inches in width. In the spring take a cutting or use a small tuber and grow it in a pot somewhere in your garden. It can be placed on the soil in the garden or grown on a table or bench. They just need regular water and a very little bit of liquid fertilizer. In the fall, harvest your pot tubers before the first frost as they are much more susceptible to freezing. Cut off the stem an inch or two above the pot and either store them in the pot or out of the pot. I store mine in the pots.

## **USING A COVER CROP ON YOUR DAHLIA GARDEN**

By Ted J. Kennedy

About 10 years ago our supplier of horse manure told us that he had a bad back was no longer able to deliver manure to our garden. That next year we stopped adding manure to our garden and used a cover crop instead. We have not missed the manure and all the work it took to spread it. And it did not smell very good either!

For many years, we were able to buy a reasonably priced mixture of cover crop seeds at Wilco. It was a mixture of 50% Rye Grain and the other 50% consisted of field peas, vetch, clover, and for a while buckwheat. Recently, they have doubled the price and we decided to mix our own. Concentrates has a wonderful selection of cover crop seeds. They have them in bulk and you buy them by the pound. We plant about two pounds of cover crop per 1000 square feet.



*FV's Dainty – Best Triple Disc Bloom 2019*  
By Larry Smith

Cover crop is also called “green manure” because it is tilled into the soil as you would manure. It provides organic material to the soil and if you grow legumes such as field peas, vetch or clover or fava beans, the plants provide nitrogen to the soil.

Some of the benefits include:

- (1) **Soil improvement** from the formation of roots. Annual Rye sends down fibrous roots that break up the soil and go as deep as three feet to bring up nutrients. This prevents soil run off, erosion, and the plants hold the fertilizer that would be washed away during the winter.
- (2) **Weed Control** The thick cover crop smothers weeds. Annual rye actually has some ability to prevent weeds from sprouting.
- (3) **Fertilizer** Besides preserving fertilizers in the soil, the legumes actually add nitrogen to the soil.
- (4) **Beneficial Insects** such as lady beetles or ground beetles, may be encouraged by planting cover crops. Certainly the worms love it.
- (5) **Dry Soil in Spring** The cover crop makes the soil dryer in the spring.
- (6) **Esthetics:** Margaret says it looks better than an ugly brown patch of dirt in your yard.

We are still using about 50% rye grain and the other 50% consists of field peas (the foliage is edible!), vetch, and the crimson clover. I added a few seeds of the Kodiak mustard to see how it does this year. Here in the Portland area, you need to plant a cover crop in October

or November (December can work too Rye as rye grain will sprout at temperatures as low as 40 degrees). But we tried planting it as a spring crop in February and it did not grow more than 18 inches tall by May 1<sup>st</sup> whereas our October planted areas were 5 feet tall by then. Planting is easy. After you dig the dahlias, just spread the seeds over the soil by hand. Then set your tiller at an inch or two and lightly till the seeds into the soil.



### *Judging at the Canby Trial Garden*

On about May 1st, we use our riding mower to mow down the cover crop and then till it into the soil. We have planted dahlias as early as the next day after tilling.

Editor's Note: Concentrates is an excellent source of cover crop seed sold by the pound. Vermiculite is also available in 4 cubic foot bags. They are located on International Way off the Milwaukie Expressway. They also offer a 10% discount to Portland Dahlias Society Members. Just bring in this bulletin as proof of membership. Here's a link to their website:

<http://concentratesnw.com/>

My fava beans and Mustard are already up! Mark Harvey of Old House Dahlias says he has had Kodiak Mustard germinate in January

## **I Love Cinnamon on My Dahlias** By Ted J. Kennedy

It is digging and dividing time and we get questions about what can be done to improve the odds that a tuber will store without rotting. Over the years, we have heard of many different potions powders and dips. Years ago some people proposed that you could dust your tubers with powerful fungicide powders such as Captan. Most of us prefer to avoid using possibly dangerous and expensive chemicals. For a while the use of sulfur dust was touted as being effective for dahlia tubers. I have seen no study that supports this and sulfur while reasonably safe for most people can cause anaphylactic shock and death in some susceptible people. I would not like to risk such an outcome and since it is not proven to work, why use it?

A few years ago, some avid dahlia growers found out that cinnamon powder has fungicidal properties and was being used by the orchid growers. Here is a paragraph from an orchid publication: “A trip to your kitchen spice cabinet yields a surprising organic fungicide that you can use on your orchids -- cinnamon. The U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency categorizes minimum-risk pesticides as those that meet certain conditions of safety to people, animals and the environment. The EPA approves cinnamon as an effectively demonstrated minimum-risk fungicide. Although you may purchase commercial products that contain cinnamon oil, ground cinnamon powder straight from the spice jar works just as well on orchids.”

Of course, several people tried the cinnamon powder on their dahlia tubers and the consensus is that it seems to work as well or better as anything else. It certainly, will not kill someone and the smell of cinnamon is very exotic and invigorating. I cannot resist calling the resulting tubers ”Cinnabons” but of course that name is trademarked. So perhaps “Cinnabers” or “Tubecinns” might have to do. Or not.

Right now people are recommending using the powder as a dip where you dip the cut end of the tuber in a small amount of the powder. And if you remove a rotten area, dust the wound with the cinnamon.

What kind of cinnamon powder works the best? In cooking there are several cinnamon powders that come from different species of bark. The original cinnamon is called Ceylon cinnamon and one source says it is the best for our purposes: “All forms of cinnamon seem to suppress a wide range of fungal species including those that cause damping off. The true cinnamon is more effective than the fake cinnamons.”

So although I used “fake cinnamon” last year, I am switching to Ceylon cinnamon this year and have ordered 8 ounces for cost of about \$11.00 with free shipping. I bet my tubers will smell better than yours!

## **Dividing Tuber Clumps in 2019**

### **By Ted J. Kennedy**

Here we are in the time of the year when we are dividing our tuber clumps. Of course, that assumes that you do dig them in the fall as do most of us. Well, anyway for those of you who sit in front of an old television set, with a space heater pointed at your legs, dividing tuber clump after tuber clump I will relate some of the changes made in the dividing process. First, we used to think that you had to divide tubers within a couple of days of digging them.

I believe that was because we washed the tubers immediately after digging and if you do not divide tubers quickly after washing mold and fungus and rot will occur in many of the clumps. Nowadays, we know that we can leave the dirt on the clumps and store them temporarily until we are ready to divide them and then wash them and there will almost no losses.

Old timers used hooked flooring knives to divide tubers. Some old-timers and many people now use hand held loppers or shears such as Felco or the more finely pointed versions from Corona and others to divide tubers. Bill Mishler was a knife person who liked short, sharp knives. He found out that these knives frequently punctured his left hand and he went to the Marine Fishing supply store and bought a stainless steel mesh glove for his left hand.

I do not know who first used bonsai scissors to divide tubers but do know that the first affordable brand was a made in Japan version, the Kengju Gardenman scissors. It is unfortunate that you cannot get Kengju Bonsai scissors as the Japanese (Kenju) company that made them was destroyed by the tsunami and never started up again.

We are lucky that a Taiwan company created a look alike and the Zenport ZS 104 is an exact replica including the red and white handles. Our club buys them in bulk and we pass on the savings to the club members, charging only \$10.00 for these scissors worth over \$15.00.

The bonsai scissors have very sharp, slender tips and removing eyes from a clump is made easy. They are also tough enough to split clumps and sharp enough (at least in the beginning) to remove all the hair roots. I have employed a good pair of kitchen shears to remove the hair roots.



*Peach Delight Best Triple Entry  
Portland Show 2019 by Max Ollieu*

## **YOU CAN HELP**

Many of you have expressed the desire to contribute to a fund for the two families of PDS club members, Bob & Cynthia Patterson in Estacada and Julie Huynh in Otis, Oregon, who suffered a total loss of their homes in the recent wild fires.

A separate account, not connected with PDS, will be opened at the Lake Grove Wells Fargo Bank. Checks are to be made out to SHIRLEY BANKSTON, 1116 SW Stephenson St., Portland, OR 97219-8218.

Please note that by giving this way your gift will not be tax deductible. If a deduction is important to you, please choose a charity name that is connected to a wildfire fund.

Donors names will be kept anonymous and your donations will be accepted now until November 16, 2020. On that date a check will be sent to the Patterson family and the Huynh family.

Many thanks for keeping Bob and Cynthia and Julie in your thoughts and prayers. Any amount we contribute will help them in starting over.

## **NOVEMBER UPDATE**

Bob & Cynthia feel very lucky and grateful for all of the support of family and friends. They continue to move forward slowly. All of the debris from the fire has been cleaned up along with all of the hazardous trees that have been removed. The area where they will build their new home is cleaned up, too.

Living in a trailer with 3 dogs is a challenge, and they are facing it all with a cheerful attitude.

Hi Shirley,

We are doing as well as can be expected. We are lucky to be staying on our property in a travel trailer. It is definitely different and the landscape is very empty. We have been working on cleaning up the property and getting it ready for our new home. It should be ready by May! Ask me how I love camping now lol! It has been a wonder to see bulbs coming up through the ash...the plants think it is springtime! I think the hardest thing has been seeing all my trees cut down! We will definitely be planting new trees as soon as we can to give our birds back a new home!

Thank you for all your good wishes and support!

Love Julie and Hal