

# Portland Dahlia Society Bulletin

Meets second Tuesday of the month at Rose City Park United Methodist Church, 5830 N.E. Alameda

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Portland Dahlia Society Website: [portlanddahlia.com](http://portlanddahlia.com)  
**Next meeting Tuesday, October 14th, 2014**

## COOKIES FOR OCTOBER

Cookie hosts for October meeting are Kathy Knutson, Leslie Bratschi, and Nan Hage and since we have so much going on this month, maybe some of the other members could pitch in as well.

## PROGRAM FOR OCTOBER

Our program for October will include the selection of next year's flower of the year. This should be a flower that's easy to grow, B size or smaller, widely available commercially and one that's not already served as dahlia of the year for the past nine years. Past flowers of the year are as follows:

2014-Rejman's Polish Kid  
2013-Lakeview Glow  
2012-Pooh  
2011-Hollyhill Bewitched  
2010-Sorbet  
2009-Weston Spanish Dancer  
2008-Chimicum Katie  
2007 - Pam Howden  
2006- Woodland's Wildthing

Members are encouraged to bring a staged entry of their nomination for 2015 Flower of the Year and the winner will be determined by popular vote. Any flower withstanding the recent weather would make a good flower of the year.

We will also have a late season Seedling Competition with cash prizes for the best overall and the most unusual.

This month's meeting will feature a demonstration on digging and dividing tuber clumps. Bring your favorite dividing tool for show and tell. Your ideas and questions are most welcome. We will also divide a few clumps members may bring in (maybe one easy and one difficult).

We will also have a silent auction (see below) of undivided clumps. Please be sure all clumps are named, clean and well washed.

## CLUMP AUCTION

At the meeting we will have undivided clumps of dahlias available. They will be sold using the "silent auction" method. Members are asked to bring a few clumps of surplus stock that can be donated to this event. Please make sure the clumps are well washed and marked with the variety name. We will have 3 x 5 note cards available for the bidding which can take place before the meeting or during the refreshment break. Last year members liked this program idea. We will repeat this program feature at the November meeting.



*Photo: Haley's Dream - M SC Bi-Color*

## TRIAL GARDEN UPDATE

All entries in the Canby Trial Garden have been officially judged with at least three qualified judges' scores. Special recognition to Teresa Bergman, Nick Gitts, Ted Kennedy, Mark Oldenkamp, Gordon Jackman, Linda Taylor, Gary Murphy and Larry Smith who took the time to score many of the entries and/or helped with receiving, watering, fertilizing, planting, grooming, record keeping and report filing.

## OCTOBER IN THE GARDEN

To dig or not to dig...? Soon the colors will begin to fade and forms will become more imprecise. The sunny brisk fall days of October will begin to wane and be

inevitably followed by the wet, short, cold, overcast days of late November. An advantage to digging this month is the soil is not yet waterlogged and the soil comes away from the tubers more easily. Also consider there may be some spots in your garden which have poor drainage and these areas should be first dug. Moreover, some varieties are more susceptible to rot in waterlogged November soil. Notoriously hard to winter over varieties like Rhonda, Mi Wong or Aitara Caress should be lifted and stored first before soil borne molds begin to do their damage.

If you have planted multiple plants of the same variety, compare them carefully to determine which plants have produced the best flowers. Which plants appear more vigorous and have the best centers and overall form? This is your *superior* stock which you will want to replant or in some instances take cuttings from next year. I sometime code the tubers and the plastic tag with an "x" by the name to so indicate.

Many of us are still making crosses and attempting to save seed for next year's stars of tomorrow. It is ok to harvest the seed pods if they are firm and straw yellow in color. Some growers like to break open and dry the seeds from the ripe pods. Others prefer to leave the pods whole and allow them to dry naturally in a dry location. I find it easy to cut the pods with foot long stems and then dry my pod bouquets grouped in ADS plastic exhibition vases. Sometimes I find I'll leave a seed pod parent alone for a few weeks until the pods become more mature. My digging methodology is quite purposeful although it may appear random.



If you are growing seedlings, I would suggest digging your first year keepers prior to frost. In many instances they are planted more shallowly than established varieties, thus being more vulnerable to a hard freeze. Many seedling growers believe in splitting the first year clumps in two prior to storing away. This tends to lessen the probability of crown rot. A dip of all cut portions of

all dahlia tubers into an anti-fungal agent helps prevent rot during storage. I use a Captan solution. Others find Benelate solution or household bleach mixed one to ten parts water effective in stopping rot or mold. Always be sure to allow your cut tubers time to cure after having divided and treated the cut portions. This should be done at storage temperature and will take 24 to 72 hours depending on relative humidity. What works well for me is dividing, curing and storing my tubers in my attached garage.

A quick note on marking tubers... Many of us use an indelible pencil of some type or simply mark the outside of the plastic storage bag with the name of the enclosed variety. We hope to have some of these available for sale at the October meeting.

It also makes sense to bring in your potroots prior to a killing frost. Just cut off the stalks even with the soil and pack up the pot, potting soil and root into storage boxes for safe keeping in your tuber storage location. Alternatively, potroots can be easily stored in nursery flats in your normal storage location and watered once a month. Tubers that have grown out of the drainage holes can be either left or removed. My experience has been it makes no difference. The only advantage of removal is tighter and neater packing of the storage boxes or flats.

## AUTUMN IN THE DAHLIA PATCH

### By Max Ollieu

Autumn, my favorite time of the year. Weather is settled most of the time, days are still warm, nights cool, and dahlias blooming until a clear, cold night comes along to end the growing season. For those of us who choose to groom our plants for dahlia shows, the daily routine changes considerably after the last show. At least for me, other than some selective deadheading, no more disbudding, no more pesticide application, no more leaf and lateral removal, etc. A great time to make even more bouquets for the house and visiting relatives and friends. Also a great time to focus on photography using the fall colors as background for different dahlia varieties. After the last dahlia show, we hold a "Kid's Day in the Dahlia Garden" where each can select and cut their own dahlia bouquet. That has been a tradition for several years. This year, 2014, we also preceded that gathering with a "Mom's Day in the Dahlia Garden" including a luncheon prior to the event. Both events were well received and plans are to continue each in 2015.

Having said and experienced all the above, I'm also starting to prepare for the Big Dig. That means getting all soaker hoses rolled up and stored, removing extra stakes needed for support, and any other obstacles such as shade cloth and movable structure that could be in the way. I also begin/continue to remove those dahlia varieties or portions of, that didn't perform well. Sometimes that's 100 percent, but more likely 10-25 percent of plants in a variety that I don't want to grow

next season or have others grow. Each year, it seems I get a little more discriminating as to what qualifies to keep within a variety. My suspicion is that most of the symptoms I'm concerned about have virus as a driver. Though it does seem I have less of a problem with those varieties that have resided in my garden for a few years compared to those relatively new to my garden. In the latter case, it's not uncommon to be left with only 1-2 healthy plants as time for the Big Dig approaches. In those instances, hopefully there will be enough tubers from which to take cuttings next spring to get back to the number of plants I hope to grow.

Meanwhile, we cover the raised beds and walkways in the dahlia garden with leaves from maple trees shading the lawn and garden. Those leaves when shredded through our riding lawnmower vacuum system completely cover the garden and walkways for the winter. By spring, earthworms will have consumed nearly all the leaf mulch as well as held most of the weeds and grass in check.

A goal of mine is to have the dahlia tubers dug, divided and stored in vermiculite by mid-November. Although killing frosts often impact my garden about mid-October, I don't wait for a frost before digging the root clumps. Varieties I don't plan to keep are dug first and the most valuable varieties dug last. Some of the rationale for this approach would include: (1) greater risk from drying out the tubers when the days are warm and the humidity low, and a somewhat shorter season for those less desired varieties and (2) wetter, cooler days allow tubers to retain their moisture better, as well as allow the more desired varieties to continue to grow and mature as long as possible.

It works best for me to dig about as many root clumps as I can process in one day. I dig, wash and label a variety before moving them into my garage for 1-2 days, then divide, dust with sulfur, let dry another day before placing in appropriate-sized containers (different sizes of plastic bags, as well as shoe-box style plastic crates from one to several gallons in size). Tops are left open/off with vermiculite just covering the tubers. New vermiculite is dampened with ¼ cup of water to one gallon of vermiculite. Larger plastic crates are used to contain the plastic bags and smaller crates. Most of my dividing is done after dark with the music turned up.

Before the society meetings in October and November, I select surplus, healthy root clumps of varieties that can be sold as fundraisers at the meetings. It's an easy way to dispose of surplus root clumps without having to divide them. I encourage others to support our society by taking a few surplus root clumps to those fall meetings as well.

Autumn is a great time to visit other dahlia gardens to see their varieties, settings, cultural approaches and to, of course, socialize. Where else can one find better friends than our fellow dahlia growers!!



Photo: Hollyhill Cotton Candy B IC DP

## FREE SOIL TESTS pH

Fall into gardening with OSU Master Gardeners™ on Saturday, October 11, at the Milwaukie Center, 5440 SE Kellogg Creek Drive, Milwaukie. From 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Clackamas County Master Gardeners will offer free classes, soil pH testing and answer gardening questions. You need to have your samples submitted for analysis prior to 11:00 AM for testing. Thanks to Debbie Thomas for alerting our membership to this FREE offer from the Clackamas County Master Gardeners. See below.

### Fall into Gardening with OSU Extension Master Gardeners™

Contact: Sherry Sheng, [sherrysheng@clear.net](mailto:sherrysheng@clear.net), 503-655-1822

Fall into gardening with OSU Master Gardeners™ on Saturday, October 11, at the Milwaukie Center, 5440 SE Kellogg Creek Drive, Milwaukie. From 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Clackamas County Master Gardeners will offer free classes, soil pH testing and answer gardening questions.

This event suits beginners and seasoned gardeners equally. Whether you grow ornamental or edible plants, 10-Minute University™ classes offer essential, reliable information in a concise format. Participants take home a handout that contains more resources on each topic.

Consider these tips for your vegetable garden: October is the best time to plant garlic, shallots, leeks; some root vegetables can be left in the ground and mulched for harvest through the winter; and simple protections can extend your harvest of some leafy vegetables. These are just a sample of the *Fall Gardening in the Vegetable Patch* class.



Our climate is good for growing all kinds of plants, weeds included. *Common Weeds* will highlight ten challenging weeds and share the most effective way to get rid of them. Applying this knowledge to your fall garden cleanup can save time and work next spring.

Another aspect of smart gardening is working in concert with nature, including the bugs that visit our garden. Often these bugs are hidden to the untrained eye until damage is rampant. *Bugs – The Good, The Bad, The Annoying* will showcase 25 bugs common to our region and offer tools to spot their presence. We will also discuss whether they are friends or foes to gardeners and how best to manage them.

Checking soil pH in the fall can help jumpstart spring planting. Amendments take time to work and now is a good time to add lime, if needed. We encourage customized analyses for your lawn, vegetable patch, rose garden and perennial bed. Each client may submit up to six soil samples taken from different areas of the garden. Consult the “Testing Soil pH” 10-Minute University handout at [www.cmastergardeners.org](http://www.cmastergardeners.org) for step-by-step instructions on how to take soil samples.

Event Schedule:

**10-Minute University™ Presentations** (9 -11 am, 25-minutes each)

- 9:00 *Fall Gardening in the Vegetable Patch*
- 9:30 *Bugs – The Good, The Bad, The Annoying*
- 10:00 *Common Weeds*
- 10:30 *How to Maintain and Sharpen Garden Tools*

**Soil pH Testing** (9 – 11:30 a.m., samples must be submitted by 11 a.m.): Get your soil tested and receive advice on needed adjustments.

During the event, Master Gardeners are available to answer gardening questions. Master Gardeners are trained volunteers educated through Oregon State University Extension Service to offer the local community Reliable, Relevant and Reachable gardening information and education opportunities.

This event is offered in support of the Oregon State University Extension Service Master Gardener™ Program and in partnership with North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District and the Milwaukie Center.

Accommodations request related to a disability should be made by September 25<sup>th</sup> to Jean Bremer, 503-655-8631, [jean.bremer@oregonstate.edu](mailto:jean.bremer@oregonstate.edu)

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## ON LINE INFORMATION

The American Dahlia Society maintains a website at <http://www.dahlia.org> which provides lots of useful information and links. If you have a computer and enjoy learning more about dahlias this is a great resource. On the ADS website there are links to joining e-mail newsgroups-bulletin boards like the dahlia- net and dahlia- creating.

The Pacific Northwest Dahlia Conference has a web site located at <http://pnecdahlia.com/index.html> Here you will find lots of eye-popping dahlia photographs as well as information about the PNDC and its member dahlia clubs

The Portland Dahlia Society’s own website is at <http://portlanddahlia.com> Here you will find more information about our club’s history, pictorial tours of the Canby Trial Garden, tour a member’s garden and see many great dahlia photographs. Both the Portland and the PNDC website are created and maintained by our own Ted Kennedy. Thanks Ted for all you do.

## HARD TO FIND VARIETIES

The Colorado Dahlia Society Website contains the “Big List” where hobbyists can find out which commercial growers have any given variety available. That said, some varieties are rare or hard to find and resources are not on the “Big List”. One of our members suggested that we can devote a corner of the Bulletin for those in search of hard to find varieties. Searchers could be contacted by folks with the illusive varieties and they could arrange terms. Please email Mike Riordan at [riordanmd1@gmail.com](mailto:riordanmd1@gmail.com) and I’ll put your varieties in our In Search of... corner.



Hollyhill Moonsong