

Portland Dahlia Society Bulletin

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

Editor: Mike Riordan (503)256-0425 Contacts: Ted Kennedy e4449@aol.com, Jeanette Benson (503) 649-4118

Portland Dahlia Society Website: portlanddahlia.com

Next meeting Tuesday, October 9th, 2018 @ 7:30 PM

COOKIES FOR OCTOBER

Cookie hosts for October meeting are Eric Toedtli and Daniel Compagna.

Since we have so much going on this month, maybe some of the other members could pitch in as well.

PROGRAM FOR OCTOBER

There will be a presentation about digging, dividing and storing tubers, including a hands demonstration on clump division. They will touch on the important task of keeping clumps and tubers labeled, especially if stock is going to be shared or donated to the club. (30 min)

Ted will (hopefully) talk about cover crops and soil amendments for this time of the year. (5 min)

We are compiling a list of dahlias that are especially difficult to store and will distribute that list at the meeting. (10 min)

We will be asking Shirley to bring the handouts about slug/snail control so that fall numbers of those pests can be reduced somewhat.

We want to remind members that Hollyhill Jitterbug is our flower of the year for 2019. It is time to look for or build up stock so that lots of people can grow it.

We will be voting at the Oct. 9 meeting for the flower that we want to be our 2020 Flower of the Year.

At some point during the Oct. 9 meeting we will have two seedling competitions—one for “any seedling 1st through 3rd year not in ADS Book” and one for seedling grown “from seeds given out at March meeting”. Also a people’s choice contest for best seeding. Cash prizes!

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.



Hollyhill Jitterbug

TRIAL GARDEN UPDATE

Nearly 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, Larry Sawyer, Gary Murphy, Nan Hage 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.

Fall Garden Tour

Both Linda Taylor and Larry Smith will open their gardens to us the afternoon of Sunday, September 30th. The hours are 1 to 4. Larry’s address is 4227 SE 76th Avenue, 97206. Linda’s address is 4930 SE 37th Avenue, 97202. They are relatively close by one another and I know you will enjoy seeing how they care for their gardens. Be sure to take notice of the new and unusual varieties they’re growing.

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.



Photo: Hollyhill Moonson

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. A more recent trend is dipping the cuts into powdered cinnamon. 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.

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 if 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

I'm 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!!

KIDS' DAY IN THE DAHLIA PATCH A TRADITION - BY MAX OLLIEU

After the close of the show season, we entertained over two dozen children during our Kids Day in the Dahlia Patch. Their delightful expressions after cutting the blooms of choice come naturally and are heartwarming for this dahlia grower/amateur photographer to experience. By 2004, the grandkids and their young friends were enjoying our dahlia blooms. Interest by the children and their parents in picking favorite dahlia blooms and bouquets continued to grow and expand with over 40 young people joining in the Kids Day activities in 2013. Consequently, Kids Day has developed into an annual tradition that not only the kids look forward to but the parents as well.

A positive consequence is that now some of the mothers and their children who participated in Kids Day activities volunteer to do much needed garden maintenance as well as year-end activities such as the digging, washing, dividing and storage of the dahlia tubers. What a bonus to have helpful friends and relatives!!! In addition, high school students have volunteered their services to fulfill floriculture class requirements. Wow, who can't use more free help!!! My approach has been to involve those students in as many dahlia-related activities as possible in the short time they are working with me. Also, I hire a few of the kids to help with garden as well as other landscape maintenance tasks our 6 rural acres badly need.

The above activities provide a continuum of exposure for kids of all ages as well as adults to dahlias and dahlia culture here on our lovely southwest Washington State acreage. The oft heard lament that we need more youth in our dahlia community seems strange from our perspective. Perhaps dahlia growers simply need to find ways to be more inclusive with friends and relatives in gardening activities with particular emphasis on the youth. Earlier, I was not aware that school as well as county agricultural courses often require students to complete course-related volunteer hours. What a great win/win opportunity for the students as well as dahlia growers to participate in these programs. As with our daughter and her friends, mothers with young families are invaluable contacts. So much so that we have set aside a special Mother's Day in the Dahlia Patch the past three years. Generally it precedes Kids Day by a week, is well attended with over a dozen mothers, includes a gourmet potluck lunch, and dahlia bouquets of their choice. Probably the start of another Day in the Dahlia Patch tradition!!!

