

# The Central West Dahlia Society of New South Wales

Volume 4. No 2. December 2009



Taratahi Lilac



## THE CENTRAL WEST DAHLIA SOCIETY INC.

Volume No.4      No2.      December 2009

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**Membership Subscriptions;**

Single: \$10.00    Family \$15.00

Affiliated Societies \$10.00    Pensioner \$5.00

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**Next meeting: Annual General Meeting 10.30am on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2010 at St. Barnabas Church Hall, McLaughlin Street Orange.**

**Following meeting: 10.30am Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April at Bathurst Panthers, Piper Street Bathurst.**

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**Bob Smith**

**November 2009**

Most will have their dahlia plants well under way by now and will be contending with heat and cold periods as well as a lack of available water. Hopefully the situation will improve in the near future.

The dahlia plot at the Orange Botanical Gardens has been planted and is looking good with only one tuber failing to emerge. It remains to be seen how the impending water restrictions at Orange are going to affect the project.

The dahlia auction held at Lithgow was a good opportunity for people to upgrade their tuber stock; though not as well supported as in previous years, it was still a success.

Liz's and my dahlia plot is looking good at the moment and we are in the fortunate position of having adequate water.

The first shows are just around the corner in the New Year so we can enjoy the end of year functions and get ready for the busy season ahead. It will become a juggling act as some shows are clashing with other events in the busy lives of members.

Don't forget the Central West championship to be held at Gulgong on 20th February.

Central Western Horticultural Society Dubbo has found using foam rubber packing in lieu of oasis for staging to be a cheaper option and the foam is reusable making staging an easier task. This method was used at the spring show at Orange as well as the rose show and I will be trying it at the dahlia shows.

Wishing everyone all the best for the festive season.

Bob Smith  
President.



### **HELLO**

December already! Firstly a few apologies for errors in the June issue starting with a spelling error on the cover- I didn't get far did I? HIGGO LACY was incorrectly named HIGGO LACEY. Secondly I formally apologise to Len Usher for completely missing a line from his poem-I will try to do better this time! I'm sure there were several other mistakes, but my memory has conveniently erased them for the moment.

Planting for me has been much later than intended and those early spells of exceptionally hot weather didn't help. Even with early morning starts-it was getting too hot too quickly (and dark too quickly at the other end of the day). However most of the darling dahlias still deigned to sprout out of the ground into the searing heat-but not a good start, poor things. I feel I am in the process of learning another important lesson or two in growing for showing!

On a more positive note- the display dahlia bed at Orange Botanic Gardens is on track and not bad at this stage. In spite of sitings in the vicinity of a rat, a resident duck and a hare (one or/all of which enjoyed some of the lupins planted for green manure).Only one -Como Polly- didn't emerge and has now been replanted. If all goes well the flowers should arouse lots of interest and hopefully inspire some new growers

Fingers crossed!

Cheers and Seasons Greetings

Jan Johnstone( editor)

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

**Rob Slarke**



Another year is drawing to a close and the 2009/2010 flowering season about to begin. Everyone has finished planting and dahlias have already started growing in a promising start to the season.

Over the past twelve months we have seen two notable developments in the Central West dahlia world. At the Orange & District Horticultural Society autumn show, which included the 2009 Central West Dahlia Championship, we had a record 280 vases of dahlias, well over double the usual number. As I was in South Australia at the Riverland Show that weekend, I am advised by those in attendance that it was wall to wall flowers and the judging and tabulation of results quite hectic. For the record, Graeme and Sharon Davis from Canberra won all the major awards, including the Central West Dahlia Championship (with Higgo Lacy – cream Fimbriated cactus, Wakefield DJ – yellow medium Cactus, and Pam – Pink Pompon), Orange Dahlia Championship (with Winkie Colonel – red giant Decorative, Maggie Hannaford – pink/white medium Decorative, and Maxmann – red giant Semi-Cactus) and the inaugural 'Other Types under 160mm Challenge' (with Pam – pink Pompon, Araluen Oberon – maroon Single, and Kens Gala – purple/white collerette). Judge Ron Wilkes is to be congratulated on a magnificent effort as he probably turned up expecting the usual comfortable hour or two judging stint and must have nearly fainted seeing all those flowers when he arrived. Thanks also go to Graeme Davis who assisted in judging the Novice and Intermediate classes.

The second major event of the year is our partnership with the Orange Botanic Gardens with the establishment of a dahlia garden. Discussions and negotiations with Orange City Council, which administers the Gardens, have been proceeding for the last 12 months, culminating in the bed being planted by our members on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2009. The intention was to grow Australian raised cultivars of each type and size range with 30 bushes in total. The small number of bushes will allow us to carefully look after the patch and there is enough space to possibly increase the number if the project is a success.

Another new initiative will take place on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2010 at the Bathurst City Centre shopping arcade where we will be staging a non-competitive dahlia display. The dahlias will be staged in type and size range and we hope to have dahlia baskets and possibly floral art. The shopping centre manager has allocated half a dozen tables and barricading. This is another opportunity to promote dahlias in the Central West so bring any promotional ideas to our next meeting. Thanks go to Kerri Small for discussing the possibility with the Centre Manager.

## Member Profile

### **ROBERT (ROB) SLARKE - LITHGOW**

The first time I saw show dahlias was at the 1996 Blackheath autumn show when Don Kelly brought his dahlias from Bowral for a display. At the time, Don was the reigning State Champion and helped me over the following couple of years to get started.

Several cultivars that I grew in the first year were Aitara Ace Off White (cream Fimbriated Cactus), Moray Susan (red Waterlily), Desert Lodge (apricot small Cactus) and Pam (pink Pompon). We lived in Wrights Road Lithgow and in 1998 moved to our present home in Hassans Walls Road where there was more garden space available. The range of cultivars was expanded with cultivars such as : Sunset Glow (apricot small Decorative), Apricot (apricot small Cactus), Reg Kappler (yellow medium Cactus), Golden Planet (gold medium/large Cactus), Sarah G (orange medium Cactus), Susan French (pink medium Cactus), Janelle (white small/medium Cactus), Como Polly (mauve medium Dec.), Brooks Megan R (apricot small Dec.), Dainty Donna (pink miniature Dec.), Hamilton Lillian (orange miniature Semi-Dec.), Moray Fleck (pink flecked miniature Dec.), Aitara Citation (yellow pink tips Fim.), Aitara Bronwyn (autumn coloured Fim.), Eureka (lemon/red Ball), Mary P (maroon Pompon), Little Snowdrop (white Pompon), Ken's Gala (purple Collerette), and Kelgai Maxina (cerise/white Collerette). The most striking flower that I grew at that time was Marlene Joy, a small/medium pink and white Fimbriated Cactus. Despite having 'fish hook' imperfections at the back of most florets, I continued to grow Marlene Joy for some years because it was such an eye-catching colour.



It was at this time that the 1998 dahlia standards were introduced. Unknown initially to a beginner, I soon discovered that not all the 'experts' were familiar with the standards. The change that seemed to most confuse the growers of the time was the introduction of the semi-decorative. As I was a new grower, I just accepted the semi-dec. as a different type but some of the older growers for many years after 1998 often referred to semi-dec's as Ball dahlias. To some extent there is still confusion today in some catalogues.

Learning any craft requires the help of others and I found that asking for assistance in growing and staging dahlias made a big difference in a short period of time. I found that by exhibiting at the bigger shows in Sydney, I was able to learn very quickly. I fondly remember the tussles I had with Cliff Taylor at St. Ives (when it used to be an autumn show) in the late 1990's and early 2000's, Don Kelly's help at Castle Hill, and my first competitive show against the immortals, Woodfield and Brooker, at Sydney Royal. In

1998 I joined the Dahlia Society of NSW & ACT and in 1999 was elected Secretary and retained the position for 3 three years.

1999 was a significant year, winning my first championship, at Engadine, with a 6 vase single type per vase entry which I remember included a very nice red/cream Collettere Brooks Connie R. Later in that season good results were obtained at Sydney Royal with, two reserve championships and a number of champion vases. Formby Supreme (yellow medium Dec.), Golden Planet (gold large Cactus), Downham Royal, (purple Ball), Glenbank Honeycomb (gold Pompon), and White Pam (white Pompon) were particularly noteworthy.

Despite the high quality of dahlias being grown in New South Wales, there was a marked difference between the city and rural shows, both in terms of flower quality and show organization. The use of two piece green plastic vases made a big difference in ease of staging and visual aesthetics, but were only available at the large city shows. Glass containers were still used at all country shows. Country show schedules still reflected the old standards and the number of exhibitors was declining. In 2002, after completing my 3 year term as Secretary of the Dahlia Society of NSW & ACT, I worked with a group of Central West dahlia enthusiasts with the goal of forming the Central West Dahlia Society. The first meeting was held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2003 at the Lithgow Workmen's Club and I was elected Secretary. The purpose of forming the new group was to promote dahlias in the Central West of NSW, distribute the newer cultivars, modernize show schedules, promote the use of the green two-piece plastic vases, and most important of all – to increase the number of exhibitors. I am pleased to say that substantial progress has been made and all of these objectives are being achieved.

During the mid 2000's the best two cultivars that I grew were Sylvia Craig Hunter (orange small/medium Decorative) and Jan Lennon (pink medium/large Cactus). Sylvia Craig Hunter was reserve champion at the 2003 50<sup>th</sup> Lithgow Workies Club show where, for the only time in my exhibiting career, just about every entry was near perfect. The grand champion at that show was a large Como Polly which I have not been able to match since. The planets must have been aligned over Lithgow that week.

Having lost Jan Lennon stock a couple of times over the previous five years I eventually grew it again in 2005 with success at Sydney Royal. At two consecutive Royal shows I was lucky enough to have a vase of Jan Lennon awarded Grand Champion on each occasion. I have retained the same stock since and swapping it each year with other growers appears to maintain the longevity.

In November 2006 I was elected as Magazine Editor of the Dahlia Society of NSW & ACT and introduced the colour booklet format which was so successful for the National Dahlia Society of Victoria and Dahlia Society of South Australia. The magazines are excellent promotional material as most members are not able to attend meetings and the magazine is their only contact with the society.

My latest challenge is growing dahlias in pots in the ground. I have been gradually phasing in this method and this year all the dahlias are in pots – only time will tell if it's successful.



*Rob Slarke at 2005 Sydney Royal Easter Show with championship entry  
Sylvia Craig Hunter  
Higgo Lacy Susan French  
Bracken Sarah Le Batts Prime  
and Grand Champion  
Jan Lennon*



## Meeting

Dahlia meetings are held for a purpose  
You don't have to be a lion tamer in a circus  
Come and air your views  
If you have a good idea we may use  
We are short of your support  
So come along for a talk  
You may be in for a treat  
Take a load off your feet  
We can have a cup of tea  
I may even bounce you on my knee  
We may not be wealthy  
But our pastime keeps us healthy  
And that keeps us alive  
To make our garden thrive  
There's no prize money or trophies to win  
Just come along and exercise your chin  
If the garden club means a lot to you  
Come along and tell us what we could do  
Maybe you have a few good tips  
The best way to get rid of thrips  
In our gardens it doesn't matter what we do  
As long as we don't use superglue!

by  
Len Usher





# Flying South for Winter-ADC Conference Tasmania

by Jan Johnstone



*Early morning view from the motel balcony*



*St Helens harbour*

I feel very privileged to have been able to attend the National dahlia conference in Tasmania. My first sighting of a dahlia enthusiast was at Canberra airport where I spotted Ron Wilkes sitting in the departure lounge. His flight was via Melbourne and he expressed some concern over going to Melbourne airport during the outbreak of swine flu-he was wondering, as many other people, whether he should wear a mask. (Later at the conference we heard from a gentleman who happened to sneeze at the airport and was taken aside, interrogated and closely scrutinised-even though it was an allergy sneeze, he hadn't dared to mention he was going to a conference for fear of being quarantined)

Luckily my flight was direct to Hobart where I met up with Yvonne Tracey at the airport. We had an enjoyable drive up to St Helens on Friday, via the coast road -stopping to take photos and to enjoy some of the wonderful scenery on the way.

On Saturday Charles Smith welcomed everyone and introduced the president of the Tasmanian Dahlia Society who officially opened the conference, informing us that we had come to the best part of Australia: Considering present conditions, the fact that it rained all day on Saturday, while we were inside conferencing, makes it pretty hard to beat! We were then reminded that the meaning of conference is to discuss together and that we did not necessarily have to agree. After talking about the origin of dahlias and the friendly rivalry amongst growers and showers, he concluded by summing up some of the joys of growing and exhibiting dahlias:-

## **Downside**

snails, tubers rot, cuttings don't strike, weather damage-rain before a show, sun causing fading, thrips and other insects, petals drop on show day and if all else is perfect the judges make wrong decisions!

## **Uppers**

new seedlings, fun of competition, anticipation, pride in colour and diversity of form-such as quilling, good centres, depth .....etc, and possibly the most important -friendship

He then thanked Charles and the travellers and declared the conference open.

Next John Menzel after wishing George Harding of Formby Dahlias a Happy 88<sup>th</sup> birthday delivered his presentation '**Down and Dirty with Dahlias**'. He talked of the importance of

getting the soil right and advocated getting a soil analysis and a good soil report done in order to get the balance right. He also told us about some of the products available to improve the condition of the soil and help produce stronger plants and better flowers.

Following was an interesting talk by Terry Lockyer from the Department of Primary Industry and Water on **PEPQ-Post Entry Plant Quarantine**. We learned a little of the history of quarantine in Tasmania –from human quarantine on Bruney Island in 1864 to plants on the same site in 1955 up to the relocation to Kingston in 1985. He mentioned the division of material into

<b>High Risk</b> (such as)	Apples, Potatoes, Cherries, Grapes and Citrus
<b>Medium Risk</b> (included)	Dahlias, bulbs and ornamentals
<b>Low Risk</b> (such as)	tissue culture-Orchids, Daphne which need a permit but no PEPQ

We were referred to the AQIS website for specific information relating to importing seed or plant materials into Australia and the relevant permits required, conditions that apply and costs involved. For private imports there was a minimum time of 3 months quarantine to allow for 3 inspections and up to 3 years withholding period for high risk materials. Although fairly expensive and rather a slow process, he indicated that it was not impossible for an individual to introduce new dahlia cultivars from overseas.

After lunch Chas Smith gave a talk and demonstration on **My Mix and to the Show**. His striking mix consisted of 2 parts vermiculite, 1 part peat to 2 parts coarse sand. For transporting dahlias he uses specially made boxes to carry either bottles or staging vases. (dahlias being rather scarce in June, he improvised using artificial daisies for the demonstration) Threes can be separated to prevent petal bruising using pegs as shown in the photo below. Smalls and miniatures can be carried 5 to a staging vase using the method shown in the second photo using pegs to clip them to the side of the vase.



*Showing how to keep blooms apart using pegs when transporting in bottles*



*Using pegs to keep stems still when transporting in staging vases*

Following was Gerard Oldfield's '**Water, Water**' with lots of interesting information about watering systems. We heard that dahlias will absorb up to 9 litres of water per plant per day,

but 2 cups or .8lt per plant per day is sufficient - people in the country use 140lt per person per day on average - 125lt in the city.

Then there was a slide show of a dahlia show in the UK and the UK Trial grounds

After a delicious afternoon tea prepared by Lucy Smith, Greg Fooks spoke to us on the subject of **'Fertilizers, What do they do?'** He mentioned the NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium) ratio and warned that excess Nitrogen can cause rot in tubers. Potassium helps build good flowers and strong stems but over use can cause Magnesium deficiency which will cause yellowing of the leaves as magnesium makes chlorophyll. An addition of Epsom salts can help to rectify this.

Animal manures and green manure help to improve soil condition by adding organic matter. After winter digging lime can be added to the soil to help raise the pH.

The first day concluded with a meeting to report on Friday's meeting and the progress being made towards forming a National Dahlia Society-there was a general feeling of optimism and much positive feedback.

On Sunday David Pyke presented a fascinating profile and slide show on George Harding, what an incredible man.

Next Les Lawson gave an interesting talk on **'The History of Dahlia Growing in Australia'**. He told us that generally in the 40's, 50's and 60's most people worked a 48hr week -at the weekends no shops were open and there was no work so gardens flourished and Dahlia societies were growing rapidly.

We were informed that Queensland suggested a national body in 1962.

In 1977 there was a Victorian Country Conference at Colac where Chas Smith spoke on virus. I met a lovely lady -Win Robertson (from Melbourne) on Monday's bus trip who had been to every conference since 1977). Hopefully in the near future the Dahlia Society of Australia Inc will be formed.

State reports followed for ACT/NSW, Tasmania, Victoria (with some heart rending stories of the terrible fires in February), South Australia, and Queensland.

Finally after lunch Chas Smith presented a summary of the results of a survey which had been completed by those attending and the conference was officially declared closed.

That afternoon there was a tuber auction to get the adrenalin running and on Sunday evening we met for an enjoyable dinner at a local restaurant.

On Monday there was a bus trip down the east coast to Coles Bay where we stopped for morning tea and then on to Swansea for lunch and a visit to a timber museum. On the way back we were all treated to a delicious ice cream at the Berry Farm and a bit of unscheduled excitement when we encountered a sudden hailstorm causing a very slippery road- luckily we were forewarned by other motorists.

On Tuesday morning we said goodbye to St Helens and friends old and new as we all started our journeys home having experienced an inspiring few days of the sharing of knowledge and ideas with a diverse group united by a common interest in Dahlias.



*ADC Conference Tasmania-Mondays coach trip to Coles Bay*

## 2010 CENTRAL WEST SHOW DATES AND CONTACT DETAILS

DATE	SHOW	CONTACT NAME	CONTACT PH.
Feb. 5-6	Rydal Show	Sarah Martin	0408 147 562
Feb. 20	Gulgong Show (Central West Championship)	Ken Evans	6374 1255
Feb.20-21	Oberon Show	Tanya Minto	6336 0777
Feb. 21	Lithgow Workies Club	Rob Slarke	6351 4244
Feb.26-27	Rylstone-Kandos Show	Carolyn Cannon	6379 7718
Feb.26-27	Blayney Show	Joan Stonestreet	6368 3514
Feb. 28	Sofala Show	Beatrix Stokes	6337 7188
Mar. 5 - 7	Royal Bathurst Show	Terry Bishop	6331 3175
Mar. 6 - 7	Horticultural Soc.of Canberra	Linn Doyle	6231 7755
Mar. 13	Cumnock	Fiona Hodges	6367 9201
Mar. 7	Koorawatha Show	Wendy Loughhead	6383 7213
T.B.A.	Orana Mall Dubbo	Coralyn Scoble	6885 6038
Mar. 20	Orange Horticultural Society	Yvonne Tracey	6362 3249
Mar.20-21	Goulburn A.P.& H. Show	Miss D. McNeil	4821 1064
Mar.26-28	Lithgow Show Society	Vanetta Renshaw	6353 1775
April 24-25	Orange Show	Helen Wood	6362 3932
May 7 - 9	Dubbo Show	Coralyn Scoble	6885 6038

Note : These details are provisional at time of printing and should be verified with the show concerned.