The JUDGE’s Corner

Ron Miner - baronminer@aol.com

The DSO purchased Wayne and Eleanor Shantz’s judging seminar DVD last winter and I have enjoyed watching it over the winter. We’ve been talking about Trueness to Form in the last couple columns and the Shantz’s comments on the topic are (like most of the rest of the material!) instructive and useful. Their basic point was that nature doesn’t pay much heed to our man-made “ideal” definitions and that there are lots of wonderful dahlias out there that don’t sit on the summits of those Form mountains.

One of the points that I’ve been trying to make is a similar one. Last month we saw a lot of great Formal Decorative dahlias that appeared quite different from one another. The examples we examined were largely big winners in the Trial Gardens or the champions at the National Show, so they were good cultivars. Perhaps the key lesson between Wayne and Eleanor’s comments and last month’s column is that the total “height” of those mountains is five (5!) points and the range of Trueness to Form values we talked about in those examples last month was less than three (3!) points.

You may recall that the last formal decorative example we discussed was Baron Keith, B FD DB. Your assignment was to figure out the location of this cultivar on Mount Formal Decorative. If you concluded that the Baron Keith florets have some Informal Decorative character, I agree with you. The way I look at it that this cultivar is definitely on that FD mountain, but it is out along that ridge that heads over to “Mount ID.”

Perhaps the key feature that keeps it FD is the regular arrangement of the florets. OK, now what penalty do you assign to this bloom for that 5 point Trueness to Form category?! As usual, it isn’t really possible to answer that question by look-

Informal Decorative: Ray florets are twisted, curled, or wavy, and of uniform size in irregular arrangement. They may be partially involute or revolute, but no portions should be fully involute or revolute except at the tip of the ray floret. The ideal depth is three-quarters of the diameter of the bloom and should not be greater than its diameter.
ing at one picture of one bloom. However, if you make the assumption that all the blooms are the same and that this bloom is typical, I would say that you are a bit further down that mountain for this cultivar and that a penalty of 3 or 3.5 points are in order.

Bloomquist Goldilocks scored 85 as a BB ID YL in the Tacoma Trial Garden last summer. The shapes of its florets are definitely not flat and their arrangement on the bloom is a little less uniform than those on Baron Keith. However, I think you would agree that the form on the two cultivars is pretty similar! It is a good example of Wayne’s point there are lots of great dahlias that don’t sit on the peak of the mountain.

Some of you may remember that I showed pictures of one of my favorite Mike Iler (Blossom Gulch Dahlias(!)) seedlings at the October meeting. Carnivale is pictured at left. It scored 90.98(!) as a BB ID DB at the National Show in Portland. Where would you put this one on the ID mountain? (Yeah, me too. :-))

Let’s look at one more example from the National Show. It did not score. This cultivar has a problem we haven’t seen in the other examples we’ve examined. What is that problem? If you can ignore the huge gap at about 7PM, you will see that there are flat florets, twisted florets, and fully revolute florets; that is, it has mixed form. Mixed form can be a severe problem. This bloom doesn’t know which mountain it wants to join. We saw some beautiful blooms of this cultivar in the originator’s garden, but this particular entry just didn’t make it.
I’d like to head off in a slightly different direction now. We could spend a lot more time on Trueness to Form and mixed form, but I want to go back to our 2013 seedling project. Many of you were able to take some seeds at the March meeting. Hopefully, they are now in the process of making great little plants for your gardens or ours. Those of you who wanted seeds from Bill Takaes’s Baron Jeffs pretty much know the appearance of the seed parent. The seeds from Kathy Iler, Blossom Gulch Dahlias, were, however gathered from a great variety of seed parents. If you retained the identity code on the envelope in which the seeds came, you will be able to identify the seed parent for your seeds among the pictures included here and on the website.

We’ll start with the singles. The “G” seeds and the “L” seeds are from the red and white dark blend; the “E” seeds, from the red and yellow bicolor; the “K” seeds from the second red and white dark blend; the “F” seeds from the purple and red bicolor; the “C” seeds from the red and yellow single that is probably a blend; and “B” seeds from the red and yellow dark blend (flame?).

Now just imagine the possible combinations for the offspring of these great singles among themselves plus with the other forms available to serve as pollen parents in Kathy’s garden, below. Barbara and Kathy Iler, below are talking about Barbara’s garden of open-centered cultivars for 2013! (I think Barbara might actually like me to forget about her having her own separate garden to take care of this year, so you all might help me to remind her about it when you have the chance. :-))

The collarettes are similarly spectacular! I assume that parent “H” looks familiar to you, too! (It is very much like Baron Aund Dorothy.) How
do you like Kathy’s 53 ‘X’? (The “I” seed parent.) The color(s) sure grabs you, doesn’t it! Can you classify it? Yes, you’re right about the CO V part; how about the color?! You Senior Judges need to be able to do that! The ray florets come first, capitalized, V (YL/RD). The YL is first because it is the dominant color. The petaloids come next, in lower case. Interesting that they are a blend: lb(yl/wh)! Putting it together: CO V (YL/RD)/lb(yl/wh). Color charting those colors would be a challenge; we’ll pass on trying to do that on a picture. The seedlings from this one promise to be very interesting!

The colors on Kathy’s 02 ‘Q’ are also a challenge. Should the ray florets be classified as a blend, a bicolor, or a solid color with an eye zone? I’ve asked for an opinion from Lou Paradise on that last option and will let you know his thought on it. I don’t know of any eye zones except on singles. Whatever the conclusion, it is a striking bloom, isn’t it! Those of you with seeds or seedlings labeled “M” should have some great colors.

The petaloids on 29 ‘A’ are long and plentiful. Are they too long or too plentiful? The color is certainly great!

More “codes” later—hope your gardens are off to a wonderful start!

Ron