The JUDGE’s Corner
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A Very Special Bloom!

I would hazard a guess that the DSO is a better known organization this month than it was last month. There were two kinds of blooms on exhibit at the National Show on Long Island on the weekend of September 18. One kind was the bloom of Kenora Wildfire pictured on the right—and the other kind was “all the rest.” I had the privilege and pleasure of judging the head table with Ted Kennedy, Jerry Landerholm and a candidate judge from NY. Determining the best entry in the show was simply “no contest!” I really did not know that the Kenora Wildfire was brought to the show in a very long, partly white knuckles, car ride by our own Tony Evangelista! (I encourage you to follow a practice that I have adopted. That is to avoid looking in any detail at others’ buckets while they are setting up their entries. That Kenora Wildfire would have stood out like a very not sore thumb!)

Congratulations, Tony and Jackie! It was truly a once in a lifetime bloom. (Well, maybe a dozen in a life time for Tony.) A number of show participants told me that they had never seen a comparable bloom and foliage!

It wasn’t the only Honor Table entry Tony brought. The yellow bloom above was the Best Fully Double Seedling at the show. Tony will name the new cultivar Fancesca Evangelista, after his sister. It will definitely be a competitive cultivar as an A SC Y. Look
out Trooper Dan! A highlight of the show for me was capturing the Best Open-Centered Seedling with one of our 2013 Blossom Gulch Seedlings, an orchette that is either a blend or a white blush. (TBD) :-)

The venue for the show was a large exhibit hall at Hofstra University on Long Island. It was a very nice hall and the setup arrangements worked pretty well. The number of blooms was lower than a typical National Show. You would understand that better if you had experienced the drive through New York City to get to Long Island.

Another Great Picnic
We enjoyed another great day at Carol and Brant’s Maple Crest Farm for the DSO picnic and judging seminar. The plants were in full bloom; the weather and the food were great. For the Judging Seminar, three teams judged three sets of ‘mystery’ dahlia plants and then discussed their analyses with the whole group. The results of the three teams agreed very well. Thanks Brant; thanks Carol for your hospitality!

Peak of Maturity
The “Guide to Judging Dahlias” tells us that a mature bloom, even with subtle faults, should beat an immature, clean bloom (p. 18) Further, it says (p. 36) that an immature bloom lacking depth is not better than a mature bloom with a tight center but also with minor faults. Consequently, we exhibitors tend to bring mature blooms that come close to, but hopefully stop short of(!)
having open centers. (I seem to have a lot of trouble staying on the closed center side of the line!) We also want to have “more to come” on the bloom.

There were a number of Badger Twinkles at the MVDS Show that illustrated the issues very well. The bloom on the head table (the top picture) was mature and clean and bright. I don’t remember who brought it, but it managed to be fully mature and retain its brightness. It was great. The blooms out on the show table illustrated several different levels of maturity.

The second bloom down was probably in the running for the head table but the larger center clearly shows that it was less mature than the bloom above it.

The third bloom is more mature than the one that made it to the head table—but the center is virtually gone. The center is not yet blown, but there are clearly no more ray florets to come before the disc florets are exposed. When there is “more to come,” the judge can still see a clear center in the bloom.

The bloom at the bottom has a blown center; i.e., you can see the disc florets in the center of the bloom. In this case, you need to look into the bloom from the right to see the disc florets. The disc florets are visible and the bloom “should be eliminated from further competition.” (GJD, p. 17) Visible disc florets on a fully double cultivar is the only fault in the GJD that has that consequence.

**DSO Seedlings**

Our DSO shows continue to feature a lot of seedlings. Part of that, I think, is the generosity of Kathy Iler when she
shared with us a ton of seeds from her open-centered seedling patch in Oregon. Those 2013 seedlings should make for a full table of Seedling Bench Evaluations at a lot of shows next year. They will also be the main feature of our final Judging Seminar for the year at the Petitti Garden Center Show. Thanks again, Kathy!

At the same time, a couple members of the DSO continue to produce great new fully double cultivars. Tony’s hand-crossed seedlings seem to win wherever he takes them, including winning at the National Show! In addition, Doc Hemminger keeps pumping out wonderful fully double seedlings. This new one, on the right, was on display at the DSO Show at Summit Mall and may be his best yet!

**Virus Update**

Professor Pappu made presentations recently both at the Midwest and the National Shows. The bottom line continues to be that you should throw out any plants that exhibit symptoms of virus on their leaves. As you continue that practice over a few years, the portion of virus free and/or virus tolerant plants in your garden will increase dramatically. In the past, we needed to guess whether a plant that looked bad needed something more in the soil or if it had virus. The brochure distributed with the June ADS Bulletin shows pictures of leaves that have virus, period, per the Professor.

Another key bit of information from the “Dahlia Doctor” is that Plants with symptomatic leaves will produce tubers with virus that will translate to plants with virus next year. Don’t save the tubers from plants that look (or looked!) like that. You don’t want to carry the virus over to next year. Additionally, make sure that you clean your tools between digging and dividing clumps of tubers. Professor Pappu believes that is the most common way that we transfer the virus from one plant to the next. A 10% solution of bleach in water is sufficient to kill the virus on your tools.

Perhaps the most exciting development on the virus front is that Jim and Carl Chuey were awarded the highest honor the ADS can bestow on an ADS member, the ADS Gold Medal. The award was given in recognition of their commitment to the elimination of virus in
our dahlia gardens. I had the privilege of presenting the Gold Medal to Jim at the Midwest Dahlia Conference Show—since we couldn’t talk Jim into going to the National. Congratulations and thanks again, Jim!

We are in the process of running an experiment that will add some hard data to some of Professor Pappu’s conclusions. If you can’t bear to throw away the rubers from an obviously bad plant, please at least mark them so you will be able to identify them in the spring. I anticipate having a lot more practical information about virus in our home gardens before next spring.

**Classification Challenge**

Do you remember the picture above of the big, white cultivar from my last column? I told you it was A sized, blush. The only question was Form. The best clue can be seen on the ray florets at around 5:30 on the bloom. The ray floret has a “wavy” cross-section, reminiscent of Goldilocks. The CHD says that the ray florets on an ID cultivar are “twisted, curled, or wavy…” The classification is therefore A ID W and the cultivar is KA’s Cloud. It was the highest scoring cultivar in the Trial Gardens last year.

Your assignment for the next column is to classify the Mystery bloom above on the right. It is about 5” in diameter. You might be able to guess the color from the photo and you should be able to determine the form. Check here again the shape of a cross-section of the ray florets.

**Petitti’s Seminar**

The main event at the traditional Judging Seminar at Petitti’s was practicing Seedling Bench Evaluation on triple entries of the 2013 Blossom Gulch seedlings. I’ll write about the results of that process next month.

Ron