Growing Dahlias Organically
by Tony Evangelista

Demo by Dave Cap
Dividing and Storing Clumps

Bring a clump to divide.
Hi Dahlia Lovers,

I hope that your garden was able to cope with the dry conditions of June and July followed by downpours in August, hardly ideal uniform weather conditions!. But thankfully the rains woke up our dahlias and produced some very decent shows. Thanks to all who entered blooms and congratulations to all who received awards of one kind or another. Check out our website for winning blooms and growers. A special shout-out to Randy and Kathy Foith for having their *Wyn’s Neon Dream* named King of the Show at the national show in Asheville and to Todd Imhoff whose *Embrace* was named Prince of the Show. The Foiths and Todd also received an Australian Medal from John Menzel, president of the Australian Dahlia Society, for exhibiting Outstanding Australian Introductions.

If you aren’t an ADS member, give yourself a Christmas or holiday gift by joining. The ADS Bulletin is filled with excellent articles and the ADS website, managed by our Sharon, is filled with all kinds of interesting dahlia information. It’s money very well spent.

Note that the Photo Contest will be in November. Also, if you have a suggestion for a speaker, let Sarah know. We just learned that the person we thought about having isn’t available. Thanks.

I hope you will be able to make the meeting this month. I’ve heard Tony’s excellent talk on the principles of organic gardening including composting, making aerated compost tea, and vermiculture. Tony is a terrific speaker so don’t miss the chance. And Dave always gives a useful demo on how to divide dahlia clumps as well as providing good information on the various way to store tubers.

I look forward to seeing you on the 21st. Note the new starting time—7:00 instead of 7:30.
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Refreshments for October
Jackie Evangelista
Nancy Riopelle
Marilyn Weber

MEETING DATES for 2016
March 18    New Introductions;
Waking up tubers
April 15    Tuber auction
May 20      Plant auction
June 17     On carnivorous plants
August 20   Picnic
October 21  On organics—Tony; Dividing/storing—Dave
November 18 Photo contest. Speaker to be determined.
December 3  Holiday party, Burntwood Tavern, Solon
THANK YOU, RODNEY and KAY!

Thank you Rodney and Kay for two superb decades of allowing us to enjoy your amazing gardens. You’ve told us that Father Time has finally forced you to cut back and return some of the gardens to lawn. It was an absolute thrill for us to admire your incredible work over the years from growing dahlias and many different and unusual varieties of tomatoes and vegetables and coleus in addition to specialty items such as Mexican petunias, rattlesnake pole beans, tequila sunrise hibiscus to creating a spectacular gourd pergola with gourds of all shapes and sizes.

When asked by a reporter why you have spent so many countless hours gardening, you replied “to inspire, educate, and share my love of gardening with everyone from veteran green thumbs to novice gardeners.” Well done and well said, Rodney. You have done that and so much more. From all who share your love, a very deep and heartfelt thank you!
BE SURE TO CLEAN CUTTING TOOL

In our effort to have virus-free dahlia gardens, we need to avoid spreading any virus that might be present. One action to take is to clean cutting tools between every single cut. Dip the tool in a jar of 10% diluted solution using bleach (ask Tony for organic alternatives). Then wipe the tool with a clean towel. Keeping tools clean (and sharp) between cuttings will keep a virus from being spread from plant to plant.

ON CREATING a NEW CULTIVAR

As you know, a known variety is reproduced from its tubers not from its seeds. New varieties are from seeds. To create a new cultivar, think of one or two desired characteristics you would like your creation to have. Letting bees do their thing, plant several plants having your desired characteristics near each other but ideally separated from the rest of your dahlias. Then as seed pods turn straw color and dry out, collect them and harvest the seed. Keep the seed dry and cool over the winter. Hand-pollination is a whole different ballgame. Watch the video at the ADS website, [www.dahlia.org](http://www.dahlia.org), click on Dahlia University, and find the last entry under Classes which is a video Learn About Hybridization of Dahlias. Have fun and good luck on creating a new cultivar.

PUTTING the GARDEN TO BED for WINTER

As winter approaches, we should:

- Remove all dead vegetation from our gardens noting not to compost unhealthy plants with mildew or mold.
- Add 1-2 inches of finished compost to our gardens.
- Get a soil test, e.g., see [www.loganlabs.com Lakeview, Ohio](http://www.loganlabs.com)
- Repair/replace deteriorating raised bed structures.
The JUDGE’s Corner
Ron Miner—baronminer@aol.com

The National Show
Judging the Best in Show

I can’t resist the temptation to start out on a bit of a personal note. Buddy Dean entered a very nice Baron Aunt Dorothy in the National Show in Asheville, NC, last month. In the Southern States shows, all the best in class entries compete for the honor of Best in Show. Buddy’s Baron Aunt Dorothy won that title! It was a controversial decision; open-centered cultivars do not often beat out their fully double competition. It made me think that our DSO system of recognizing the best entry in each of the various classes - but avoiding direct competition between the open-centered and fully double cultivars - is a pretty good approach.

What would you do if you were among the judges picking the Best in Show (BIS) among a set of nearly perfect open-centered and fully double candidates. (That is probably what Barbara and Sharon are doing in the picture at the right.) Let’s assume that you’ve discussed the quality of the entries with the team of judges working on BIS. My counsel to you would be to think about your choice in the context of the ADS Seedling Score Sheet. You don’t need to try to come up with a score for each entry; you need to think about the size of the deduction you would make for the faults you’ve seen in the various entries. That is possible because you can assume here that each of the blooms was nearly perfect and you can therefore just consider deductions for the faults you and the team have identified.

Let’s just consider the Baron Aunt Dorothy entry. Look at the close-up of the bloom in the picture on the left. What faults do you see in the picture? It is a good bloom, isn’t it; but remember, we are now looking for the smallest of faults in order to distinguish among the best
close-up of the bloom in the picture on the left. What faults do you see? It is a good bloom, isn’t it; but remember, we are now looking for the smallest of faults in order to distinguish among the best of entries! At the time this picture was taken (not necessarily at the time the entry was judged!), there are some pretty clear Form faults, or Symmetry faults, associated with the distribution of the ray florets around the bloom. The gaps at 4 and 8 o’clock are different from those at 3 and 9 o’clock, for example. Another Symmetry issue is that the ray floret at 3 o’clock is fluted; the others are not. (See page 61 of the Guide to Judging Dahlias (GJD). “Fluted: …. A fault if not uniform.”)

How important is Symmetry in an open-centered cultivar? I hope each of you is saying to yourself “Very!!” As I’ve said in previous columns, those 28 Form points get divided only over Symmetry, Trueness-to-Type, and Maturity when you are dealing with an open-centered entry; right? Contour and Size Proportion drop out! (p. 40, GJD) Ok, a couple somewhat subtle Symmetry faults in that Baron Aunt Dorothy entry weigh pretty heavily in your thinking on the best choice. You want to translate those faults to a numerical value so that you can compare that value to the value of the faults in the other candidates. The GJD does not tell you the value of Symmetry in an open-centered cultivar. Let’s see what happens if we assume that we value Maturity and Trueness to Type as 6 points each and value Symmetry at 16 points. I would rate the Symmetry as just barely passing here so that it would get 85% of those 16 points, translating to a penalty of about 2.5 points. Now you need to look at the other attributes and add up those penalties. Perhaps you find another 1.5 points among them. Now you need to do the same thing for each of the others in contention. It may be easier to do that now that you have a 4 point penalty in mind for the Baron Aunt Dorothy.
The question then is: Are there 4 points of penalties clearly present in any of them? If not, you tell your colleagues, again, that you are concerned about the Form issues on B Aunt D. You might also say to the team that the Wyn’s Neon Dream (Randy’s wonderful bloom that was King of the Show) would be your choice for the Best in Show honors.

It turns out, however, that the team determines that the Baron Aunt Dorothy entry is the BIS. What do you do now?? (I know that you know the answer to that one!) You own the majority decision of the team even if you disagree with it. When someone asks you how the heck that ‘weed’ beat out the “King of the Show,” you say something to the effect that we sure liked that one, too, but concluded, as a team, that the Baron Aunt Dorothy should get the nod.

Judging at the National

As usual at a National Show, there were a lot of judging teams (25!) at Asheville. I had the pleasure of judging with a Southern States judge who was familiar with the local judging procedures and a National Capital DS member whom I had not met before. We followed Glenn Ruth’s advice to enjoy the process and learn something from each other. One of the basic benefits of going to a National Show is the opportunity to judge with and learn from judges with totally different experience from yours. Judging with a new team is almost certain to provide many opportunities to build your knowledge.

Ohio Participants Did Well

Our Ohio dahlia growers did very well at the show, capturing a lot of the head table spots. Sharon has already posted some of the show results on the ADS website (dahlia.org) and a more complete list will be available there soon after they get the information to her.

One of the highlights of the weekend was an excellent presentation by our own Tony Evangelista. He made a great case for the advantages of an organic approach to our dahlia gardens. His message was very well received by a large group of ADS members and guests from around the world.

Classification Meeting

I always enjoy Lou Paradise’s Classification Committee meeting. Two items stood out for me. First, Lou continues to encourage all of us to have “micro” (less than 2” in diameter) classes in our shows. He includes one class for fully double and one class for open-centered cultivars (except S/MS) in the Bay area shows. The classes are not particularly full; but he wants to be sure that the tiny blooms are saved and have a place to be exhibited.
S/MS) in the Bay area shows. The classes are not particularly full; but he wants to be sure that the tiny blooms are saved and have a place to be exhibited.

Second, the committee discussed how best to handle picotee coloring. I hope at least a couple of you are saying “what” coloring?? I did! The bloom at the right, above, shows one of the seedlings I took to the show. The white along the edge of the ray florets is “picotee” coloring. I had picotee (and liked it!) - but didn’t know what to call it! The question before the committee was what, if anything, should be done to recognize or characterize picotee in dahlias. There was no particular support for adding another color class; but it is possible that the committee will come up with some way to add the picotee feature to the color description of a cultivar with it. Picotee is, after all, an important part of the appearance of the bloom, at least as obvious as most eye zones, for example. The key point from the judging perspective is that it is not a fault. It does add another element requiring uniformity. Just like in a blend, the picotee should be uniform around the bloom. The ray floret at 7 o’clock in the seedling seems to fall a little short of that expectation.

Annual Meeting Virus Update

My update on the state of the virus project at the end of the Annual meeting inspired the most spirited discussion of the morning. I reported that the recent results of virus analysis in my garden were more complicated than those from 2015. While I had none of the Dahlia Mosaic Virus or Dahlia Common Mosaic Virus that I had last year, nearly 80% of my plants tested positive for Tomato Streak Virus (TSV). Perhaps the most disappointing observation was that TSV was detected in some of the plants grown from “G1” tubers. The G1 tubers were taken from plants that had no virus detected in 2015.

Professor Pappu had no simple explanation for that result. He did conclude, nevertheless, that the best strategy for us to pursue is still to test as many plants as possible this year. My key message to the group was,
therefore, to encourage each society to take advantage of the opportuni-
ty to test plants this year. The cost of testing in 2016 is artificially low
as a result of a large donation by our friend and colleague, Jim Chuey,
on behalf of the Scheetz-Chuey Foundation. I hope that it will be pos-
sible to reach another arrangement for testing next year, but that is not
yet in place and will depend, to some extent, on the nature of the results
achieved this year.

Minimizing Virus in your Garden

There are a number of things that you can do this Fall to help
minimize the presence of virus in your garden next year. First, pull out
any plants that are exhibiting yellowing along the veins of the leaves.
At right is a picture of a plant I pulled out today. I think (hope!) I’ve now re-
moved all the plants I need to pull. It is a little less painful to do so now at the
end of the season. Second, disinfect your cutting tools after you use them on
one plant. Do not move on to another plant without doing so. If the first plant
has virus and you don’t disinfect the tool, you will almost certainly infect the
second plant when you inflict the mas-

sive wound caused by cutting off a dead-
head, for example. Remember that an insect can transfer the virus with
a tiny bite. Third, when you are digging your plants, keep your shovel
well away from the tubers.
Finally, when you are dividing the tubers, trim the end of the tubers and
disinfect your tools again between each clump. Your garden will bene-
fit from making those practices your standard practices!

October Quiz

The picture at right illustrates a 2016
seedling with a color problem I usually have
trouble capturing and even describing. What is
the problem?

More on the Petitti seminar next month,
but the BIS comments above turned out to be
pretty relevant Saturday, right?

Ron
DSO/ADS Membership Application
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