Friday, June 16 Meeting
7:00 p.m.
Busch Community Room
7501 Ridge Road, Parma
Just south of Pleasant Valley Road

Identifying Nutrient Deficiencies on Your Plants by Looking at Its Foliage

Ron Miner
Hi Dahlia Lovers,

I trust that you have planted all of your dahlias by now and are anxiously awaiting the beauty of color and form that they promise to bring later this summer and fall. Wouldn’t it be neat if one of those dahlias would be brand new, never to have been seen before, and it is YOUR very own? If interested, ask about hybridizing in Q&A in the June meeting. We have several members who have introduced new dahlias. The topic for the program is on nutrient deficiencies of dahlia plants as detected in their foliage. This is a terrific topic and especially when presented by Ron.

Sad news came from Cincinnati the end of last month informing the dahlia world that Bob Moynahan had passed away. Bob was a great grower whose introductions were under Robann. He and wife Anna ran the Cincinnati Trial Garden for many years. They received the ADS Gold Medal in 2008.

Please help us find speakers for our October and November meetings. Our list which was so promising at the beginning of the year quickly went south. So if you can provide some solid leads, we will follow through confirmation. Thanks.

And thanks to Dave Cap, Rob Swaney, Bob Wenning and Teressa Nemeth who helped Mike and Doc propagate the plants we sold. When you see them give them a thankful pat on the back for a job very well done. It takes a lot of time and tlc to produce 500 or so plants and we truly appreciate their effort. And thanks to Sharon for making the picture tags that help buyers identify the dahlias they are buying. Very helpful. And what would we ever do without Dave organizing our sales and shows. You are one of a kind Dave. Super thanks for all that you do for DSO.

Jerry
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REFRESHMENTS

Kathy Foith
Sarah Thompson

MEETING DATES for 2017

March 17 New Introductions; Expert Dahlia Panel
April 21 Tuber auction
May 19 Plant auction
June 16 Plant nutrient deficiencies, Ron Miner
August 19 Picnic at Aurora Nature Center; Tour and Judging seminar at Ron’s afterwards (optional)
October 20 Photo contest; dividing/storing -Dave; speaker?
November 17 Speaker tbd
December 3 Holiday party, Burntwood Tavern, Solon
About Growing Dahlias

Plants need healthy soil so be sure to add compost to your soil to replenish the nutrients that were used last growing season. Work in about 4” worth. The organic matter of compost helps the soil drain better and as Tony often tells us, compost helps to attract beneficial insects, worms and micro-organisms.

Ideally, you should have a soil test done which will determine what fertilizer and other nutrients you need to add to make your soil most efficient for growing your dahlias. Typically, the soil should be rich and well-drained, slightly acidic with pH 6.5—7.0.

Since you have no doubt already planted, let’s talk bugs a bit. Slugs love dahlias and especially when the plants are young. There are all kinds of ways to get rid of slugs. Have you seen Dave out at midnight with his headlight and salt shaker? Or Tony with his bunting cake pans centered around each plant creating a moat for slugs to swim to insect heaven? Typically after plants get several inches tall, no slug bait is needed although I have picked them off 3 feet about ground level!

I know that some of you won’t agree but I don’t think that deer relish dahlias. Yes, they will nibble if there is nothing else around to their liking such as apples (which I was told after we planted 10 apple tress recently to expand our Faith Garden at church)! Bummer.
Earwigs— the omnivorous Jekyll and Hyde of garden insects as they can be beneficial in that they eat aphids, mites, insect larvae, and slugs (!) but they also love dahlias chewing holes in leaves and petals (and the silk of that sweet corn on the cob you are having for dinner tonight). Yuk. So although they are nature’s natural composter, I don’t want them around come bloom-time.

To trap earwigs, loosely crumple a page or two of lightly moistened newspaper and put around suspected areas at early night. Earwigs love moist areas; over night they will congregate in the newspaper so that in the morning dump the whole newspaper into hot, soapy water to drown them. Another method is to put a deep container in the soil with its open top at ground level. Half-fill it with soapy water and smear oil around the rim. The critters will fall in and drown. Check container daily.

Other troublesome insects are aphids, spider mites, and thrips. More and more literature is encouraging us to avoid the use of pesticides as many of them are harmful to beneficial insects and also to US for that matter. Try spraying the entire plant and especially under leaves with a water spray from the hose to knock the critters to the ground. If that is not working, try an insecticidal soap spray or horticultural oil. Be sure the temperature is under 80 degrees.
Thanks

I need to start with a couple ‘thanks’ to the folks who invest so much time and effort in getting our season off to a great start. Mike Weber and Doc Hemminger are the guys responsible for the beautiful plants that are the basis for our plant sales at Holden and Rockefeller as well as the DSO auction. Dave Cap and his crew, of course, actually make the sales happen! Thanks very much, ladies and gentlemen! The results of your efforts are wonderful plants that are greatly appreciated.

Growing the plants and taking cuttings were more complicated this year as a consequence of our efforts to provide “G1” plants for the DSO and Midwest auctions.

Tony Evangelista is the guy who made that bit of offense possible. He provided the G1 tubers to Mike from the plants in his garden that tested free of virus last year. Professor Pappu has argued that using tubers from plants that test to be free of virus (G1 tubers) is the best way to get plants that are free of virus in the subsequent year. Our data from 2015 and 2016 support that premise. Thanks, Tony, for making it possible to substantially expand that G1 project!

Thanks also go out to those of you who purchased G1 plants at the auction. Remember that we will be organizing a shipment of leaves from those G1 plants for testing at WSU. Our objective is to further understand the probability of a G1 tuber to yield a G1 plant the following year. The opportunity to have WSU perform those tests at no cost to us is a direct result of the ongoing support for the virus work by Jim Chuey and the Scheetz-Chuey Foundation. Thanks, Jim.

Take care of the G1 plants you purchased—as well as the rest of your plants—by sterilizing your tools with a 10% bleach solution every time you move from one plant to the next. It is a great habit to acquire. I keep a fresh solution on my bench whenever I’m working on my dahlias so that it’s easy to dip my cutting
tools whenever I use them. An old Gatorade bottle works well for holding the solution and is easy to replace every couple hours.

**Color!**

I’ve invested the last couple columns in a discussion of one of the most important attributes of dahlias: Color. It is the first item on the seedling score sheet and comprises 22% of the points assigned to determine the quality of dahlias. Probably more important, however, is that our dahlias exhibit bright and bold colors and color combinations that grab our attention and fascinate both dahlia growers and the public.

When you are in any judging situation, whether at a show or in a Trial Garden, it is very important that you do a good job in evaluating the quality of the color in the entries you are evaluating. Remember that there is a handy summary of attributes to consider on the back of the seedling score cards and also in the back of the Classification and Handbook of Dahlias. (The size of the font in the CHD is about the same as it is here!)

Note that if your entries display a combination of colors, you need to add other characteristics for consideration. The key one, that we discussed last month, is the uniformity of the other color(s) on the ray florets and around the bloom.

We covered blushes, blends, and bicolors last month. Variegated dahlias are the last of the color combinations recognized by the ADS.

**Variegated**

Variegated is one of the 15 official ADS colors. The requirements for good variegated quality are pretty similar to those for bicolors. While a blend requires a gradual transition from one color to the next, bicolors and variegated blooms require a sharp separation between the colors. As you might expect, my favorite variegated flower
was Princess Paige, named after my only granddaughter. :-) I have lost all my stock of it, so let me know if you have some! It did a good job of meeting the sharp separation between colors. Do you see some other faults here? The key one is that there are 6 or 7 ray florets that have stripes of red along with the flecks of red. That is, the distribution of the second color is not uniform throughout the bloom. It appears that there may also be a white ray floret at the top of the bloom and another that is a bit short of red flecks at just past 3 o’clock on the face of the bloom.

If this were typical of an entry in the Trial Garden, how many of the 22 color points would you deduct? Start with the consideration of passing or failing as you consider that question. On the plus side the separation of colors is very good and there are no wolf petals. On the down side the distribution of colors is uneven on some petals. A passing score requires a deduction of 3.3 points or less. My thought is that this bloom is not representative of a passing score for variegated color. Bummer. I would rate it at –4 or –5 for color.

Some of you may recall the seedling on the left. It was one of my favorites among the original Blossom Gulch seedlings we grew in 2013. It is a good way to wrap up our discussion of variegated color.

Look back to the criteria for Bicolors and Variegated color on the previous page. This one gets high marks for “Even distribution of the 2nd color.” I suppose you might penalize it a bit for the fact that some of the flecks are streaks. However, the streaks are largely uniformly distributed
among the flecks. There is also “Good contrast” between the flecks and the base color of the ray florets and a “Sharp/distinct separation” between the colors. Is there an “Adequate amount 2nd color?” The “Guide to Judging Dahlias” does not provide any guidance on what is “adequate.” It may fall a little short of “ideal” but it is plenty adequate to tell it is variegated. Consequently, my thought on a score for the variegation is high, probably close to no deduction.

There is more to the Color story for this seedling, isn’t there?

What is the base color of the ray florets?
What is the color of the petaloids? If we were somehow able to erase the red flecks, what would be left on the ray florets? I suggest that we would find a blend of yellow at the base of the florets and dark pink or orange at the outside ends. We would need to identify the best matching color chips to figure out which blend is the correct one for this bloom. As I recall, it was a Light Blend. What is the quality of that blend? “In blends, two or more evenly merging harmonious or pleasingly contrasting colors should be apparent.” (GJD, p.12) The two colors aren’t particularly “apparent” with the variegations all over both. On the other hand, there is certainly a “Smooth transition between colors” and, at least to me, the colors are “Harmonious.” What would we deduct for the subtlety of the colors in the blend on the ray florets? My thought would be that the penalty should be small; maybe .5 or 1 point.

Next, the petaloids. They are also probably best characterized as variegated; but the two petaloids in the picture sure don’t have a nice uniform distribution of the red flecks! Inasmuch as the petaloids are a relatively insignificant part of the color of the bloom, my thought here would be that the penalty for showing poor variegation would be small, too; perhaps 1 point.

Now that we have identified all of the elements of color on this seedling, can you classify it? The first steps are easy, right: CO V. Next, we need the dominant part of the ray florets: LB. I got YL18/OR18 last year. With red variegations, the basic color becomes: V LB YL18/OR18 / RD 24. Now add the variegated petaloids to get: CO V LB YL18/OR18 / RD24 / v wh0/rd24! Easy, right!

Ron
DAHLIA CULTURE

When Ron introduced me to this insane hobby of growing dahlias close to 30 years ago, I remember his visiting my then 5 or 6 plants, Kenora Sunset my initial favorite, and started to pinch off side buds and disbranch much to my horror! He assured me that it was the right thing to do even if I never showed in competition. And right he was to produce nicer looking blooms! The exercise begins by pinching out the center growing tip. When this is done depends on the bloom size category—about 3 sets of paired leaves for the large sizes (AA, A), wait until 5 or so pairs appear otherwise. When buds are produced they do so in threes. Pinch off the two side ones. Enjoy the result! Be sure to keep the branches tied to the stake as they will break off in strong winds or heavy rains.

CUTTING DAHLIAS

How long do cut dahlias last? To my mind, not nearly long enough for a bloom so stunningly beautiful. But to try to lengthen such life immediately place the cut dahlia into a vase of water. Be sure to use a sharp clean knife. Also every couple days re-cut and change the water. Use of a commercial flower preserver can help to prolong blossom life or a home brew consisting of a solution of 1/4 teaspoon of bleach plus 2 teaspoons of sugar to 1/2 gallon of water. Even so, I feel very lucky if I can get a cut dahlia to last 5 days. Let me know your secret if yours last longer. Thanks.
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