Hi Dahlia Lovers,

April showers seem to be lingering but it’s too early for dahlias to be planted outside anyway so enjoy starting them inside. If you bought tubers at the auction last month and you have them potted, they should be showing an inch or two of growth by now. Tubers typically don’t need water but once they start to sprout, give them a drink.

Keep in mind that we are selling plants at Rockefeller Greenhouse 9-4 on Thursday the 18th through Saturday the 20th as well as at Holden on Friday the 19th through Sunday the 21st. Holden is noon—6 on Friday, and 10-4 other days. Please help out for an hour or so; let Dave know that you are willing. Thanks.

The DSO 2017 Flower of the Year is, Carl, a beautiful red Single which is an introduction by member Harriet Chandler who named the variety in memory of Carl Chuey, Jim’s brother. Carl passed away three years ago; he was a professor of biology at Youngstown State University. There will be some plants for auction at our meeting. Harriet is offering a $100 prize for the best Carl at our show in September!

Attendance was very low at our April tuber auction. Hopefully it will be much larger next week. Let me know if you have any ideas as to why it was not well attended. Thanks.

See you at Rockefeller or Holden or Busch!

Jerry
OFFICERS and CHAIRS

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REFRESHMENTS

Kathy Foith
Barbara Miner
MaryAnn Moreno

MEETING DATES for 2017

March 17  New Introductions; Expert Dahlia Panel
April 21  Tuber auction
May 19  Plant auction
June 16  Panel on Hybridizing; Possible video on plant nutrient deficiencies
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

A Preview of Some of the Plants Available for Auction at the May Meeting

Mike has indicated that at least one plant will be available at the auction for the following varieties. Quantities are limited but if you don’t get your choice at the auction, they may be available at Rockefeller or Holden. Check there as well.

AA:  Clyde’s Choice
     Penhill Watermelon
     Wanda’s Capella

Miniature:  Rebecca Lynn
           Badger Twinkle

Waterlilies:  Taratal Ruby
             Wildwood Marie

A:
AC Paint
Spartacus

Collarette:  Alpen Diamond
           Emmalia
           Little Miss Judy (Doc’s Intro)

B:
Neon Splendor
Pinelands Princess
Clearview Louise
Hamari Accord
AC Abby

Flower of the Year:
            Carl—20 plants

BB:
Ferncliff Bliss
Parkland Rave
Maudie (Doc’s Intro)
Lakeview Glow
Kylie Bug
WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING?
May and June

**May**
- Drive stake (5’ or more) and plant tuber or plant when soil reaches 55˚. A and AA 24” to 36” apart, otherwise 18 “ to 24”.
- Attach label to stake—name, size, form, color.
- If a tuber, dig hole 5-6” deep, place tuber horizontally eye up, cover with 2” of soil with time-release fertilizer, as plant grows fill hole, no water needed until see foliage growth.
- If a plant, water with a transplant solution. May break off one or two sets of lower leaves and plant a little deeper.
- SLUGS await to enjoy breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Find a favorite way to eliminate them—physical removal, traps, barriers, baits. Ask Tony what he does.

**June**
- As the plant grows, keep it tied (not too tightly so as to cause damage). If not tied, wind and rain can break off laterals. Using large tomato cages may minimize having to tie.
- To promote branching and blooming, pinch out the middle growing tip of the plant. For A and AA sizes, 2 or 3 leaf pairs should remain; B, 3 or 4; BB and Ball 4 or 5. Keep in mind that to avoid mildew, you may want to remove leaf pairs perhaps up to a foot of space from the ground for circulation. So take that into account in your initial removals.
- Each leaf pair will produce two laterals and two blooms. Remove some laterals (disbranching) to maximize size of resulting blooms. For show quality, the number of laterals should be 3 or 4 for A/AA; 5 or 6 for B; 7 or 8 for BB and Balls; and whatever keeps smaller varieties in control.
- When plants are around 5” tall, they need nitrogen. You can use a water-soluble fertilizer low in potassium and phosphorus. Wet the leaves and around the base of the plant.
- When plants are 6” tall, apply a layer of mulch.

The JUDGE’s Corner  
Ron Miner - baronminer@aol.com

Color!
Barbara has made a number of wall hangings that feature dahlias. This one is hanging on our kitchen door. A couple others like this one will become a feature of the boutique that will happen at our 2018 Midwest Show. (You may want to get one for your kitchen door! They come with a guarantee for a smile when you look at them.) I think the wall hangings are strikingly beautiful as a result of the “riot of color” I mentioned in last month’s column.

Last month I talked about the quality of color in self-colored dahlias. Clear, bright, sparkling, and lustrous colors are a key element of the attractiveness of dahlias both to us growers and to those amazed bystanders at a show who want to touch them to see if they are real. Assessing the quality of color is also a key part of our job as judges. The presence of gray in the color and any lack in the uniformity of the distribution of the color are key issues there. Fading and streaking are important faults to monitor.

Color combinations contribute significantly to the beauty of our favorite flower and they add a level of complexity to our judging process. The distribution of the two or more colors must now be uniform on the ray florets. That added requirement can make it a little more difficult for a multicolored dahlia to beat a ‘self-colored’ dahlia as they compete for a higher award.
**Color Combinations**

The Classification and Handbook of Dahlias (CHD) lists five different classes of dahlias with more than one color: Light Blends, Dark Blends, Flame Blends, Variegated, and Bicolors. Each has its own unique set of requirements for their colors. In addition, we have lots of color options on the open-centered cultivars: petaloids, differing face and reverse colors on Orchids and Orchettes, domes on Anemones, and eye zones on Singles and Mignon Singles. We have generated lots of practical experience on the open-centered cultivars since we started growing the Blossom Gulch seedlings! (Thanks, again, Kathy!)

**Blushes and Blends**

When is a blend not a blend? It is not a blend when it is a blush. Distinguishing between the two can be problematic if you are seeing the cultivar for the first time. “A light, uniformly tinged coloration of florets represents a blush.” (GJD, p.12) The manual suggests that one key to a blush is that it can vary from one part of the season to another or from one part of the country to another. “Leniency should be the rule … since the blush … can vary substantially.” (GJD, p.12) The blush, above is one of my personal favorites since I was the first person to see it. (:-)) It is Baron Dalton.

“In blends, two or more evenly merging harmonious or pleasingly contrasting colors should be apparent.” (GJD, p.12) It is important that the two colors be different colors. That is, two different chip colors from the same color does not make a blend. The two colors also need to be apparent at arm’s length.

The example on the left certainly meets both of those last criteria. This one is Ritchie’s RAJ and the picture is from the 2016 Bonneyville Mills Trial Garden. They determined that the colors are WH1 and PR24. Does that make it a Light Blend or a Dark Blend? What do you think, DSO judges? The starting point for that decision is to know that the GJD tells us that white “is not a factor in determining whether a variety is a light blend or a dark blend.” (GJD p.12) That is, you just ignore white. Next, you need to look in the CHD to see whether PR24 falls in the list of Light Blends or the list of Dark Blends. You can skip that step if you remember that all purples are in the Dark Blend list. Ok, that means it is a DB (BB C DB PR24/WH1).

The CHD provides a complete list of colors that fall in Dark Blends, Light Blends, and Flame Blends. In deciding between DB and LB, ignore white then check which list contains the second color. If you don’t have white as one of the colors, you need to determine which of the two colors is dominant in the bloom. Then you look up the dominant color in the CHD lists and assign it to the appropriate blend.

Flame Blends can be a little more tricky inasmuch as there can be an overlap with the other blends and you may need to make a judgment call as to whether the color will “simulate flames of fire by the merging of colors” (GJD, p.12) or not. In general, however, if the colors are listed in the Flame Blend list, the cultivar should be classified as a Flame Blend.

The key attributes of a blend are a uniform distribution of the two colors on the ray florets, a smooth or gradual transition from one of the colors to the other, and a pleasing combination of colors. Frankly, I do not know how to judge that last criterion! Perhaps this is one of those areas where the ladies’ eyes are better than mine. My counsel, nevertheless, is to avoid penalizing an entry for a color combination that is not pleasing. As I see it, “pleasing,” like beauty, is largely in the eye of the beholder.

**Bicolored Dahlias**

Take another look at Barbara’s wall hanging. Does one of those dahlias leap out at you? My eye is drawn to the dark red bloom
with the white tips. “The ideal bicolor will have consistent, uniform tips or stripes of distinct contrasting color with little bleeding.” (GJD, p.13) Let’s take another look at the DB we just talked about. Some of you might have said that it looks more like a Bicolor than a Dark Blend. It is an appropriate comment! The question is the extent of the bleeding between the two colors. Examination of the tips of the ray florets (inset) shows that there is a tendency for a gradual transition from purple to white, rather than a sharp color break. That characteristic is the reason that it was classified as a Dark Blend rather than a Bicolor.

Stripes, like the seedling on the right, are the other kind of Bicolor. Here, too, a sharp break between the colors is required. In this case, a sharp break is apparent. There is little bleeding of the orange into the white. The amount of each color also affects the quality. “Bicolors slightly tipped with white or other contrasting colors should not rate as high as cultivars where the outer tip is one-quarter to one-sixth of the ray floret. The striped bicolor on the other hand, which extends the length of the ray floret should contrast from one color to the other by one-quarter to one-half the … width.” (GJD, p.13)

The key color quality characteristics required for Bicolors are a uniform distribution of the second color around the bloom, a sharp transition from one color to the other and the correct balance between the two colors. (More on color next month!)

**Dahlia Hygiene**

Remember that there are critical cleanliness steps required to protect your tubers while you are getting ready to plant them. Sterilize your tools with a 10% solution of bleach in water. Do not move from one plant to the next without sterilizing the tools. If one of your plants has virus, you could spread it to many others.

Yellow sticky tape in your plant starting area can also help minimize transfer of virus by insects.  

Ron
DSO/ADS Membership Application
(Memberships are calendar year.)

Please fill out completely (even for renewals).

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Name(s): ______________________________________
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