The SECRET LIFE of SOIL
Phyllis Mihalik
Master Gardener

Friday, June 15 Meeting
7:00 p.m.
Busch Community Room
7501 Ridge Road, Parma
Just south of Pleasant Valley Road
Moreno’s Memo

Hi Dahlia Lovers,

Thanks to all of you who helped sell tubers and plants at Petitti’s, Rockefeller Greenhouse, and Holden Arboretum. In addition to our tuber and plant auctions, we did very well. I don’t have the figures at the moment but they will be available at the June meeting. Speaking of the June meeting, member Karl Southerland has managed a terrific meeting featuring Master Gardener Phyllis Mihalik who will tell us all about The Secret Life of Soil. Read about her elsewhere in this Digest. This promises to be a very interesting program so don’t miss it!

Keep in mind that our Flower of the Year is Kenora Wildfire.

I’m writing this before some of us are attending the Midwest Dahlia Conference Business Meeting and Auction Saturday June 2 in Elkhart, Indiana. As you may know, the proceeds from that dahlia auction go to the host of the Midwest Show—DSO this year!! Hope we do well.

Your summer project is to find around items for our Hospitality bags for the Midwest Show. Anything goes. One year I recall a sample of Udder Cream was part of the gift bag! Try to get around 80. A trial size bag of Oscomote would be great.

I know that many of you have already planted. I had intended to be among you but all of a sudden my calendar filled with other commitments. I’m looking at June 7 or 8 at the moment!

Doc Hemminger is under hospice care. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers.

See you at our meeting June 15.  Jerry

DSO/ADS Membership Application

(Memberships are calendar year.)

Please fill out completely (even for renewals).

Date: __________________________
Name(s): ______________________________________________
Address: ________________________________ ________________________________
Phone: ___________________ Alt Phone: ____________________
Email(s): _______________________________________________

PLEASE choose one of the following membership offerings by checking the box before the offering:

[ ] DSO Individual $15
[ ] DSO Family $20
[ ] DSO Individual + ADS Individual $39
[ ] DSO Family + ADS Individual $44
[ ] DSO Family + ADS Family $47

For ADS “Snowbird” service add $6.
Enter winter address here.

[ ] Check here if you want your Digest in printed format.

Please make checks payable to DSO.

Mail to: Sharon Swaney
340 Aurora-Hudson Rd.
Aurora, OH 44202
MARK YOUR CALENDAR 2018

August 11-12: Cuyahoga County Fair  
Staging after set-up Saturday 7:30—11:00 am  
Teardown Sunday 8:30 pm

August 24-26: Mahoning Valley Dahlia Society  
Carnation City Mall, Alliance

August 31—September 1-2: Geauga County Fair  
Must register before August 9. See form at the Geauga County Fair website.  
Set-up Friday: 4:00—9:00 pm

September 7-9: DSO Midwest Dahlia Conference  
Holiday Inn Strongsville  
Staging: Friday 4:00 pm - Saturday 9:00 am

September 21-23: National Show  
Philadelphia PA

October 6-7: DSO Member Show  
Petitti Oakwood  
Staging after set-up: Saturday 8:00—11:00

DAHLIA CULTURE

Whether you show your dahlias in competition or not, you should “top your dahlia plants” that allows the plant to produce equal laterals and a more symmetrical, bushy shape. Let the plant stalk produce four or five sets of leaves. Then snip off the tip of the plant as seen in the photo.

OFFICERS and CHAIRS

Jerry Moreno, President.................................440-543-5658
Sharon Swaney, Treasurer and Membership........330-562-3296
1st Vice President.................................You?.................................
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Recording Secretary.................................You?.................................
MaryAnn Moreno, Corresponding Secretary........440-543-5658
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Mike Weber, Propagation Chair.........................440-647-3162
Barbara Hosta, Archives and Librarian..............216-524-2635
Jerry Moreno Digest Editor............................440-543-5658
Barbara Hosta, Cleveland Botanical Rep............440-729-9714
Nancy Riopelle, Sunshine Chair........................330-483-3360
Tony Evangelista, ADS Representative..............440-867-3711
Sharon Swaney, Webmaster............................330-562-3296

Refreshments for June

Karen Jeric  
Kathleen Higgins

MEETING DATES for 2018

March 16   Edible Gardening; Rob Dzurec  
New Introductions

April 20   Tuber auction

May 18     Plant auction

June 15    The Secret Life of Soil, Phyllis Mihalik

August 18  Picnic at Aurora Nature Center; Judging seminar afterwards at Ron’s (optional)

October 19 Speaker tbd; Dividing/storing-Dave

November 16 Photo contest; Speaker tbd

December 1 Holiday party, Burntwood Tavern, Solon
Phyllis Mihalik

A gardener her whole life, Phyllis became a certified Master Gardener with Ohio State University in 2004 and then was the county wide coordinator from 2005-2009. She designed and co-managed the Memorial Garden project of Red Simmons at the Geauga County Safety Center, winning the state Master gardener project of the year. That was followed by designing and implementing the Healing Garden at UH Geauga Hospital in Chardon. In 2016, she designed and with the Geauga master gardeners created a monarch waystation at the Lake County Waste Management reclaimed landfill by planning over 1000 milkweed seedlings.

In addition Phyllis
- Teaches a wide variety of gardening classes including garden design, shade gardening, growing prize winning roses, floral design
- Speaks regularly on a variety of horticulture topics
- Competes and judges at floral and science fairs throughout the country
- Assists home owners with gardening problems through the Master Gardener program
- Provides landscape designs for homeowners as well as professional landscapers and nurseries through her business PM Consulting

Phyllis lives in Munson with her husband Joh who is also a gardener. She earned he Bachelor of Science degree in computer science from Lake Erie College and an Executive MBA from Case Western Reserve University. After retiring from her management/operations consulting business, she now focuses her life on travel and gardening being especially passionate about shade, perennial and rose gardening. She and John frequently open their gardens for non-profit fundraisers.

Thrips are tiny insects that feed preferably on flowers. One common thrips species is popularly known as ‘western flower thrips’ as these are primarily flower (pollen) feeders. Adult western flower thrips are approximately 1-2 mm in length and generally yellowish-brown in color. Besides causing direct damage, they spread viruses from plant to plant during the process of feeding.

Thrips primarily reproduce through eggs, which develop into larva, pupa and into adults. The life cycle (egg to adult) could take up to 30 days but this is influenced by temperature and could be as short as 14 to 20 days. Because of this relatively short time period, thrips populations could build up rapidly under optimal conditions.

The incidence of some of the dahlia viruses could be reduced by managing thrips populations in our gardens. A non-chemical option is the use of blue and yellow sticky cards. It has been shown that thrips get attracted to these two colors. Having these sticky cards at the plant canopy would help reduce the numbers to some extent. If the cards become ‘filled’ with insects, it is advisable to replace them with fresh cards.

Another option to reduce the thrips numbers in our gardens includes an organic chemical option. Spinosad is available in formulations for garden applications and is sold as ‘Monterey Garden Insect Spray.’ (See Amazon options, for example, or your local garden center.) Organic in nature, Spinosad is effective against thrips.

One important thing to keep in mind when it comes to using Spinosad is not to over-do it. Excessive use could result in developing resistance in thrips to this chemical. Count the thrips on the sticky cards on a weekly basis. One guideline is to apply Spinosad if the thrips numbers exceed, on an average, 20 on the sticky cards, with no more than 3 or 4 applications during the season.
The Importance of Thrip Control in Dahlia Gardens

Professor Hanu Pappu, holder of Washington State University’s Carl F. and James J. Chuey Chair for Dahlia Research and Development, prepared an article for the March 2018, ADS Bulletin covering the relationship between thrips and the presence of virus in our dahlia gardens. This article extracts key portions of the Bulletin article.

Several results from our study of the incidence of virus in 2017 pointed to the importance of thrips in spreading the disease (also covered in the March 2018 Bulletin). First, the incidence of viruses was greatest in the viruses spread by thrips. Second the greatest amount of virus developed later in the season when flowers were present. Thrips tend to preferentially attack pollen/blooms. Finally, the evidence suggested that the viruses in 2017 tended to be from in-season infestation, rather than carried over from the previous season.

The majority of dahlia-infecting viruses are spread by two major means: through vegetative/propagating materials (cuttings, tubers, bulbs), and by insects. The major insect groups that are known to transmit dahlia-infecting viruses include aphids and thrips. It is important to note that a given virus is spread by only one group of insects. For example, cucumber mosaic virus (CMV) and dahlia mosaic virus (DMV) are spread only by aphids. Similarly, other dahlia-infecting viruses such as impatiens necrotic spot virus (INSV), tobacco streak virus, (TSV), and tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV) are spread by thrips. Insects that specifically spread these viruses are called “vectors.” In commercial crop production systems such as potato, tomato, pepper, peanut, and cucurbits, virus outbreaks are largely due to these vector populations spreading the viruses between fields and within fields.

The role of insect vectors in spreading viruses within and between dahlia gardens is not well understood. From the 2017 results of testing plants from G1 tubers it appears that we need to give more attention to reducing the vector populations, especially those of thrips, since the three most prevalent viruses turned out to be spread by thrips during the production season.

Thrips have a wide host range: they feed on hundreds of different plants that include the crops we grow and many weeds. Complete eradication of alternate hosts of thrips is neither practical nor economical.

The SECRET LIFE of SOIL
Get the soil right and your plants will THRIVE!

Learn:
- What makes up soil
- Be able to identify your type of soil
- How to do a professional soil test (soil test kits will be available)
- What pH is and why it is so very important
- Composting
- How we ruin our soils every day
- How to fix your soil’s problems.

TO MULCH or NOT to MULCH
By Doc Peters

In Raising Beautiful Dahlias the Easy Way, Doc Peters of Grand Valley DS presents pros and cons to mulching around dahlias.

On the pro side, mulch keeps weeks at bay, preserves moisture, might provide some protection from an early freeze in the fall, and creates a healthy environment through its humus and soil amending contributions.

On the con side, mulch provides a home for our dreaded pests—slugs and earwigs, so more attention needs to be given to catching those critters. Also mulch may increase the chances of mildew infestation.

So, which to do? Doc takes the easy way out and let’s the final decision up to you. Experiment and see what works best in your dahlia patch.
The JUDGE’S CORNER  Ron Miner  baronminer@aol.com

Color Determination on Open-Centered Cultivars

Last month we covered the basics of the color of fully double cultivars. My plan was to move on this month to the classification of color for the open-centered cultivars. It has been five years since we undertook the Blossum Gulch project of growing open-centered seedlings from seeds supplied by Kathy Iler. I hope that those of you who participated in that project enjoyed it as much as I did! The bad news is that those plans for that column never came to fruition as a result of a lot of other complications—including a high school graduation in California (Congratulations, Bryce!)

The good news is that I wrote a lot about the color of those seedlings around that time and still have those columns largely in hand. Please forgive, therefore, a repeat of selected portions of a 2014 column on determining the color of open-centered cultivars!

In last month’s column, we talked about one of the most important characteristics of our dahlias, both from the point of view of evaluation and from the point of view of public interest — color! Did you all get out your 2014 Classification and Handbook of dahlias (CHD) and look at the new ADS procedure for classifying open-centered dahlias on pages 6 and 7? Following that procedure, I asked you to generate the classification of the seedling below left. The bloom shows the characteristics of both an orchid and a collarette; i.e., it has both fully involute ray florets and petaloids. This year, that makes it an Orchette (OT), the newest of the ADS’ various forms. Until this year, the cultivar would have been classified as a novelty, NO, and the color class would have been problematic! Even as an OT, the color required a new system to classify the color, a procedure that Lou Paradise describes on pages 6 and 7 of the CHD. We start with the fact that the color class is determined on the basis of the reverse of the ray florets, as it does in orchids. I would like to be able to take a look at the back of the flower in the picture, but without being able to do that, what would you call the color class for this seedling? We can see both red and white, so the options are probably DB or BI. The transition between the colors is not sharp, so I would opt for DB W/R, suggesting that the majority of the ray floret we can see is white, not red. Next comes the color of the face of the ray florets (just like in an orchid), preceded by a “/” and in lower case letters; i.e., DB W/R / r. Finally, we need to capture the color(s) of the petaloids. Those color(s) are preceded by a dash (-): DB W/R / r—w. It is a complicated process that we will get more used to using as we work through our BG seedlings! I’ve already kidded Lou about how we are supposed to treat an eye zone at the base of the ray florets. I know that we do have BG seedlings with colors at least that complicated. At some point we will no doubt conclude that the added complications of capturing the colors can’t be justified on the basis of better characterization of the seedling.

This variegated collarette, for example, has a yellow eye zone. The current color nomenclature doesn’t let you add an eye zone on a collarette. How important is it for us to be able to do it? There will certainly be discussion within the ADS Classification Committee on that topic in the future.

That seedling makes a great segue to the other topic I wanted to include in this column. While its color puts it right at the top of my seedling “keeper” list, it has some characteristics that are pretty troubling. Take another look here; what do you think about Form? That ray floret at noon is a big problem; isn’t it! I hope that it is not typical of the other blooms to come from that cultivar next year, but let’s pretend they all look pretty much like that one. Let’s also pretend that you have three blooms like that sitting on the Seedling Bench for numerical evaluation. Color is a strong attribute that would also contribute to Distinction for the entry but even the color has some substantial flaws. Check those streaks on the 7 o’clock and 2 o’clock ray florets. Nevertheless, I think you would agree that the color is passing, i.e., better than 85%.

Have fun getting your 2018 garden started. New stuff next month; I promise!

Ron