Next Meeting:
Friday, May 17, 7 PM
Busch Community Room
7501 Ridge Road, Parma

Program:
Annual Plant Auction

INSIDE: Meet a Member—Nancy Riopelle;
Ron Miner on the new Classification Guide
and judging stellars; Tony Evangelista
on planting dahlias.
Hi Dahlia Lovers,

We had a marvelous Tuber Auction at our April meeting that brought in $1,099, a nice addition to our treasury. Thanks to Mike Weber, Dave Cap, and Barbara Hosta for their enthusiastic auctioneering. I hope that you were able to get the varieties you wanted for your garden this season. Also exciting was the addition of a few new members to DSO. Every organization needs new faces and new ideas (to supplement some of our “older” faces)! I hope that we get a great turnout for our May Plant Auction also. Mike and others have been working hard at Willoway propagating many plants for our Auction as well as our sales at Rockefeller and Holden.

Please try to devote an hour or two of your time to our sales at the Rockefeller Greenhouse on May 16-18, 9-4 and at the Holden Arboretum May 17 from noon-6 for Holden members and May 18-19, 10-4, for the general public. In addition, both sites have many different types of plants for you to look at and purchase. Congratulations to Nancy Riopelle and Tom Sopzcak, who passed the appropriate judging exam and are now Accredited Judges. I encourage you to go through the process of becoming a judge if for no other reason than to improve your growing of our most loved flower. Knowing what it is that judges look for when evaluating a bloom will increase in your dahlia culture knowledge and your ability to produce even more beautiful flowers. To sign up, contact Ron Miner at baronminer@aol.com.

DSO and the Mahoning Valley Dahlia Society are considering whether to host the 2021 Midwest and possibly National Dahlia Show. Member Todd Imhoff of Wooster suggested using the Ohio State University Wooster Campus Conference Center and invited a group of members to preview it recently. Stay tuned as information becomes available. If Wooster doesn’t work out, then we might try Holiday Inn Strongsville again.

Hope to see you May 17 or at one of our sales.

Jerry
MAY 17 MEETING: Fill in your dahlia garden with these ready-to-go plants lovingly raised by Mike Weber and DSO volunteers including Dave Cap, Bob Leonelli, Mark Mazurek, Rob Swaney, Jerry Moreno and Tony Evangelista at Willoway Nurseries in Avon Lake. About 80 of the 500 plus plants they produced will be auctioned off at the May 17 meeting. Thanks to Tom Demaline for letting us use his greenhouse space once again.


UPCOMING DSO PROGRAMS: Friday, June 21, Nancy Riopelle on raising monarch butterflies; Summer picnic, Saturday, Aug. 3, Moebius Nature Center, Aurora. Mark your calendars!
Our new membership chair, Nancy Riopelle, became interested in growing dahlias after attending a fall talk at a nearby garden club meeting given by none other than our own Mike Weber and Dave Cap. They brought a bucket of beautiful flowers, and she was hooked.

She now grows about 40 plants in two raised beds and has experimented with various methods of storing the roots. Nancy says that the easy method of wrapping them in Saran wrap, putting in them in a box, and storing in it her basement has worked best for her lately. Nancy recently passed the test to become a dahlia judge and was awarded her certification at our last meeting by Ron Miner. She started showing dahlias in 2011 at the DSO show at Petitti’s. Her favorite dahlias are Elma Elizabeth and Baron Jeff.

Among her many other interests is raising monarch butterflies, which she will tell us about at our June 21 program. Knowing that this beautiful creature is declining in numbers, she began raising them last year. She will tell us about their favorite food, the four phases they go through, their unique migration pattern, and the many obstacles to survival they face. She reports that monarchs can even be tagged. Don't miss this sure to be fascinating program.

Another of Nancy's many hobbies is photography. She won seven awards for her dahlia photos at the American Dahlia Society National Show last September including first place in the Portrait category with a shot of Baron Todd, shown at left. She uses a Nikon D-800 camera and enjoys photographing birds as well, an interest that led her to become a volunteer at the Medina Raptor Center, which houses about 20 permanent birds including eagles, hawks, owls, peregrine falcons, kestrels and turkey vultures. Injured birds are released when possible (Rescue, Rehabilitate, Release), but those that cannot be are used in public educational programs. For
example, the center recently took three birds to the Earth Day observance at the Medina County Park District. Nancy helps with preparing their food, feeding the birds and administering medicine and is now getting into learning how to handle them. She also enjoys painting watercolors, mostly of birds. Somehow she also finds time to volunteer at Playhouse Square as a Redcoat, seating people or scanning tickets.

Nancy grew up in Parma and graduated from Valley Forge High School after which she worked for the U. S. Treasury Dept. as a stenographer in the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division and worked her way up to become a Special Agent investigating tax fraud. After that she worked for 15 years at Contour Tool as an office manager and set up their ISO 9000 quality control program. She retired a few years ago.

She has been married for 40 years to Buzz, who is a retired firefighter/paramedic from North Olmsted Fire Dept. They also jointly raise bees and at present maintain 15 hives. He takes care of the hives and bottles honey while she makes beeswax candles, hand lotion and lip balm for sale at fairs such as the Pioneer Day Fallfest at Brecksville Metroparks. Nancy reports that a good friend and Editor of Bee Culture magazine uses their operation for his photos. Most recently he asked them to demonstrate how to make lip balm for a Japanese television show. Finally, in the winter, she and Buzz go to Colorado for the month of March to ski. They are certified ski instructors at Boston Mills. To say the least, this couple leads a varied and interesting life.

CORRECTION: March speaker Nathan Rutz says “glomalin is not damaging but very beneficial.” It coats and protects micorrhizal fungi underground much like bark coats trees above ground. For more information, see: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1144429.pdf.
PLANTING DAHLIAS

by Tony Evangelista

For new growers, the process of establishing a dahlia garden starts with selecting the best possible location. Dahlias need at least six hours of sun but don’t do well in full sun. So you’ll need an area that gets some shade but isn’t riddled with tree roots. Or you can plant in full sun and devise a way to shade the plants such as overhead slats or shade cloth. Good drainage is also a must as dahlias do not like wet feet especially if they are started from tubers. Plants started from cuttings can better withstand rot due to overwatering or an unfortunate early rainy season. Finally, dahlias do best in fertile soil and thrive in good quality compost.

Stakes should be placed before planting at least three feet apart for large varieties and about two feet apart for smaller varieties and poms. Waiting to stake can result in spearing the tuber or disturbing plant roots. Some growers install suspended 4 inch square netting above the plants and allow them to grow through. Usually two layers are used at about 15 and 30 inches above the soil surface depending on how much shade your dahlias get.

Dahlias should be planted after all danger of frost has passed at about the same time as tomatoes, peppers and annuals. Tubers with eyes can be planted earlier since the soil will protect them, but they may not grow much until the soil has warmed. You can also start your tubers inside in flats or pots under lights to get them going and help them withstand early rain. How deep to plant them depends on your soil characteristics and drainage. In sandy fast draining soil, tubers can be planted 3-4 inches deep. In heavier soils it is best to plant 2-3 inches deep. Leave some of the tuber and the eye visible. As the eye starts to grow, cover the tuber and eventually the sprout. In very heavy soil with minimal drainage, tubers can be planted on mounds. Also, consider the soil type if you are starting with plants. You can strip lower leaves to plant deeper in dry sandy soil or you can plant them at soil level or in hilled up mounds.

Since dahlias are heavy feeders, dig in soil amendments before planting such as compost, compost tea, worm castings and biochar. Some gardeners use NPK fertilizers. Water tubers sparingly early in the season since they are being nourished by the tuber that you don’t want to rot. Be sure to protect your plants against slugs and rabbits. And, finally, if you suspect the quality of your soil or find that your plants are not thriving, get a soil test.
Join the “Micro Experiment”
How many of you in the ADS have opened your 2019 ADS Classification and Handbook of Dahlias (CHD) yet? This CHD is different! Take a look at page 14. My first reaction was what the heck are all those “M’s?!" The answer is that they provide a new class number for every form (except two) in a “micro” size, less than 2” in diameter. The two exceptions are the two where a micro size already exists: balls (P) and singles (MS). You will find that pages 4 through 6 in the CHD provide the definitions for the various micro forms. They are the same as the normal forms but are limited to 2” in diameter.

The objective of this five-year experiment is to encourage the growth and the distribution of evolving tiny dahlias. At the end of that time, the Classification Committee will either adopt or drop the new classes. I suppose they might also extend the experiment in the Forms where the most new cultivars are being shown. In the meantime, look for new opportunities to show tiny dahlias of all forms, in addition to P and MS blooms. I would anticipate that the classes would likely be joined together like in Fully Double and Open-Centered classes.

Robert Walker [MC FD DB (5013)] at right, is one of very few micros in the CHD. It looks like a P from the front but the ray florets must flatten out near the equator and beyond—to make it FD.

The success of the experiment could have long-term effects on the future of the ADS. Like Mignon Single plants, the micro dahlias tend to be small plants that can readily be grown in pots. If we were to succeed in...
interesting “patio gardeners” to join the ADS and participate in our shows, we might substantially broaden our membership base.

We may be called upon to judge a micro class this summer. Don’t panic. Just follow exactly the same criteria you use for evaluating any other size class. You definitely want to reward diminutiveness [Guide to Judging Dahlias (GJD), p. 32]. Size may come to be a critical question in the process. There are only about 20 micros listed in the 2019 CHD, so you are likely to have a mixture of those micros plus new cultivars plus small cultivars classified as Miniatures or one of the Open-Centered forms. Those Miniatures or Open-Centered entries should be set back or moved to the right class if they are larger than 2”. Seedlings should probably be given the benefit of the doubt up to perhaps 2.5”. They might, in the long run, be classified as micros.

**Judging Trueness to Form in Stellars**

The ideal definition for the Stellar form includes several important characteristics: long, narrow, and pointed ray florets; space between the ray florets; a uniform regular arrangement; a partially involute U-shaped cross-section; and recurving toward the stem. Note, too, that the minimum depth for a ST is half the diameter, unlike most fully double cultivars that require 3/4 the diameter. Remember that, if you are judging a seedling, trueness to form comprises only 5 of the 28 Form points. On the show bench, however, the deviations from that ideal definition could determine the winner of the class. What are those associated Form faults? Answer: Just the opposite of the foregoing list including wide ray florets with a round tip a high petal count producing a very dense set of ray florets and, perhaps, great depth, an “informal” appearing distribution of florets, and flat rather than U-shaped florets.

Try to rank order these blooms on the basis of their “elevation” on Form mountain. Camano Pet, at right, is the cultivar that...
served as the starting point for the creation of the Stellar class. Consequently, the definition was largely written around it, and it would be near the top of the Stellar Form mountain. How do the three blooms below deviate from this ideal? The orange bloom on the left exhibits ray florets that are clearly U-shaped, but they are somewhat irregularly distributed around the bloom. They give an appearance of an “informal” stellar, rather than a “formal” stellar. The yellow bloom, in the middle, has narrow pointed ray florets but they are certainly not U-shaped up near the front of the bloom. No doubt they are more U-shaped near the equator of the bloom but they don’t show in this picture. As always, a picture is a difficult basis for classification, but there would appear to be no “extra” space between the ray florets here. They are closely packed, at least from the front view. The florets also exhibit some of the irregular arrangement as the orange bloom.

What deviations from the ideal form definition do you find on the bi-color bloom? The ray florets are long and narrow, but they certainly are not pointed. They are arranged uniformly in a “formal” manner. There is space between the florets. In addition, the florets have a partially involute, U-shaped cross-section. The bottom line, at least as far as we can tell from the picture, is that this bi-colored bloom deviates from ideal form only in that the tips of the florets are not particularly pointed.

Now, if we could only put those pointed tips from any of the other blooms on the end of the bi-color, we would have a nearly perfect match to the ideal definition. My answer to the foregoing ranking question would be that the bicolor and Camano Pet are close to the mountain peak. The orange is down the hill a bit and the yellow is down far enough to deserve a failing score on “True Form.” Judges: What is a failing score on True Form? (GJD, p.40)
MAY REFRESHMENTS
Pat Sadataki, Chair
Barb Miner and Kathleen Higgins.
If you are able to bring refreshments in May, please e-mail Pat at: sadataki@aol.com

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Meeting Program Facilitators: Barbara Hosta, March; Nancy Riopelle, June; Karen Jeric and Debbie Findlay, August Picnic; Karl Southerland, October; Sarah and Jim Thompson, November; and Joyce Southerland and Joann Bendokaitis, December holiday luncheon.

THANKS TO ALL FOR HELPING THE DSO!
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• If you haven't paid your dues yet, please do so at the April meeting or send in the form on page 11.
• Visit the DSO website at: www.dahliassococietyofohio.org.
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