MARCH 21 MEETING
7:30 p.m.
Busch Community Room
7501 Ridge Road, Parma
Just south of Pleasant Valley Road

PROGRAM

New Dahlia Introductions for 2008
(postponed program from last month)

Dahlia conversation
(e.g., how and when to start your tubers indoors)

BRING YOUR EXTRA TUBERS
if you have any; to be used for our tuber/plant sales. Thanks!
Hi Folks,

Hard to believe Spring is less than a couple of weeks away. Snow, sleet and freezing rain—and a colossal blizzard—are hardly indicators of an early Spring.

Hopefully you have had a chance to check out the status of your stored tubers and found them to be in good shape. Don’t forget to bring any extra tubers you may have to the March meeting. We will need as many as possible for our sales at Pettitis the weekend of April 12 and 13. Please make sure they are all properly marked, (i.e., name, classification and color). If you could also give some thought to volunteering at one of these sales it would be greatly appreciated.

By the time you read this, we will have started our propagation for plants at Willoway Nursery. Hopefully, Mother Nature will shine some light on our project. I’ve purchased some different variety of tubers from several different growers so we’ll have a greater selection of plants to sell this year.

Hope to see you all at the March meeting.

Mike
OFFICERS-CHAIRS/PHONE NUMBERS

MIKE WEBER, President..........................440-647-3162
BARBARA HOSTA, First Vice President........216-524-2635
DAVE CAP, Second Vice President..........440-888-5589
JOANN BENDOKAITIS, Treasurer..............440-543-4515
YOUR NAME?, Recording Secretary...........???-???-????
MARYANN MORENO, Corresponding Secretary....
                                          440-543-5658
JOHN BENDOKAITIS, Membership Chair......440-543-4515
BARBARA HOSTA, Digest Co-Editor..........216-524-2635
e-mail: bxh5@po.cwru.edu
JERRY MORENO, Digest Co-Editor............440-543-5658
e-mail: maryannjerry@alltel.net or moreno@jcu.edu
KATIE JANDA, Sunshine Chair...............440-285-2385
JERRY MORENO, ADS Representative......440-543-5658

PROGRAMS for 2008

Refreshments for March:
Greg Blank, Kathy and Randy Foith, Marilyn Weber

Feb 15       DVD’s on New Introductions and more
March 21     A program on Soil Testing...tentative
April 18     DSO Annual Tuber Auction
May 16       DSO Annual Plant/Tuber Auction
June 20      Container Gardening with Dahlias
July         Picnic...site to be determined
August       Bus Trip to Local Dahlia Gardens and the
              MVDS Trial Garden, Fellows Riverside Garden
October 17   Digging, Storing, Dividing
November 21  Photo Contest
December 5   Holiday Dinner Meeting........FIRST Friday
SHOW SCHEDULE for 2008

Cuyahoga County Fair Aug 9
Mahoning Valley Show Aug 23, 24
Geauga County Fair Aug 29 setup
DSO 78th Annual Sept 6-7
Midwest Show Cincinnati Sept 13-14

TUBER/PLANT SALES for 2008

**PLEASE VOLUNTEER TO HELP**

Pettiti’s Oakwood April 12
Pettiti’s Strongsville April 13
DSO Annual Tuber April 18
Holden Arboretum May 2-4
Rockefeller Gardens May 16-18
DSO Annual Plant May 16
Your Dahlia TO DO Checklist:

• Check your stored tubers—if lots have turned to mush, then wait patiently for DSO’s tuber and plant sales April 18 and May 16, or if you have ants in your pants — Check out www.dahlias.net/dbiglist.htm for suppliers.

• Attend DSO meetings and ask questions. We have many expert growers who are more than willing to share their expertise.

• Get involved in one or more DSO activities this year, e.g., assist at one of our sales, help setup a show, become a clerk at a show or better yet, become an apprentice judge. It really is a lot of fun!

• Share your dahlia blooms with friends or shut-ins or take a vase to the local post office, your doctor’s office, especially dentist’s office. See Hank Doll’s survey elsewhere in this Digest.
As one might expect, many people delight in sharing their dahlias with family, friends, neighbors and colleagues at work. In addition, they enjoy taking them to their churches and to nursing homes where the enthusiastic response they receive is always appreciated. As one of the survey respondents said, “The pleasure that I get from growing dahlias and the bright eyes and smiles when I give them to people is more than payment enough for me…”

The nuances in these rather predictable ways in which we share our dahlias are really quite interesting. One person, for example, fixes sometimes as many as 65 “dahlia baskets” that are placed on tables at her church suppers and are subsequently sold for $10 apiece. She quips that some of her customers have purchased as many as three or four baskets because “they can’t decide which particular one they want.”

Buckets of dahlias are left in the narthex of another person’s church so that people can take them home after the service. In one nursing home setting, the flowers go to a physical therapy gym where they help to “lift the spirits of hurting people.” And at hospitals, the same thing happens.

A Michigan doctor who responded to the survey said that he has become best known at his facility not as the lab director, but as the “dahlia man.” When the dahlias are in season, he changes them every 4 to 5 days and sometimes puts out a multiple bloom exhibit just like he would for a show. “The amazing thing,” he says, “is that the entire hospital is talking about dahlias” to the point where some of his colleagues have been inspired to grow them.

Helping to address the problems associated with various kinds of pain and assisting with the healing process seem to be important roles for dahlias. In addition to the places I’ve mentioned, they’ve also been taken to dentists’ offices where everyone at one time or another experiences the pain of the drill, and they go to funeral homes...
where they are used to lift the spirits of those who have lost loved ones.

On the flip side of pain, dahlia are also used to embellish weddings and to add to the color of the event. They enhance fashion shows and have been distributed with the food that volunteers deliver through the Meals on Wheels program. Other interesting venues for the flowers include: pizza parlors, grocery stores, bakeries, banks, and surprisingly, even a hair salon at J. C. Penney’s of all places! People give them for all kinds of laudable purposes, but to meet personal needs as well. As one person said who passes them out to receptionists at dental and medical clinics, “It does wonders when making the appointments of your choice.” Similarly, a real estate broker in Oregon uses them to boost sales. He enters his potential customers in tuber and flower drawings and invites the winners to view his garden.

Of course, there are those like me who use dahlia to generate cash for charities other than churches. One person gives her flowers to a local wine store which in turn sells them and donates the money to an animal hospital. She also gives flowers to a local elementary school to be sold as part of their annual fundraiser. Perhaps her most interesting ploy is to give her flowers to a friend who dries the petals in her microwave and then makes them into “beautiful cards” which presumably are sold in her community.

Such imagination and such a wonderful cross section of ideas give evidence that dahlia growers have found a great many ways to share the results of their efforts. Though I think I’ve covered most of the ideas that were generated through the survey, I apologize if I haven’t included them all. Undoubtedly, there are many more good ideas out there that haven’t been expressed. I thank all of the people who took the time to answer the survey and hope that everyone who reads this will be inspired to try some of these innovative ideas. The multiple uses of the dahlia obviously offer the potential for great satisfaction!
The Trial Garden Directors had a tough time last year trying to determine the form of some of their entries. Some of you have seen Baron Drew; it contributed to the confusion. It was stellar in one trial garden but formal decorative in the others so it ended up being classified FD. There was an entry from the Pacific Northwest that was classified as a stellar in two trial gardens, as a formal decorative in another TG, and an informal decorative in a fourth. I hope all of you saw Irish Pinwheel in the Mahoning Valley Trial Garden. It is a striking flame blend that was classified as a stellar in each of the trial gardens where it was entered. It won the Darrell Hart Medal as the best ST entered in the trial gardens last year.

The confusion on the classification of stellar dahlias arises from the fact that their ray florets bear a lot of similarity to those of formal decorative dahlias and determining the classification of a new cultivar can be difficult. The Trial Garden Directors are currently working on trying to refine the stellar definition so that the confusion can be reduced. When you are judging seedlings, it is very important that you study the formation and the distribution of the ray florets carefully and then compare your observations to the definitions in the current *Classification and Handbook of Dahlias*. 
When you are judging in a dahlia show, how important is it that the entry you are studying matches the ideal definition of form? The Judging Manual provides the answer to that question. I hope you will look up the answer there. Now is a great time to catch up on some of that review you were going to do right after the season ended last fall!

Ok, I will give you a quick overview on that part of the book, but remember it is far better to read it in detail yourself. The five key issues in evaluating the Form of a fully double entry are symmetry, contour, development, trueness to form, and depth. Of the 28 points assigned to Form, depth gets 8 and each of the others get 5. Thus, trueness to form is a characteristic that you need to consider in evaluating form, but it is less than 20% of the score. Remember, too, the mountain peak analogy. The ideal definition describes the mountain peak, but the great majority of our show dahlias lie on the hillsides around that peak.

Hope you are having a great winter and your tubers are sleeping well, getting ready to wake up for a new wonderful season!
Dahlia Do’s and Don’ts for Beginners
Installment 2: Spring Garden Prep; Planting

based on material from Richard Parshall.

Last month the topic was purchasing dahlia tubers. This month’s is on spring garden preparation, and where, when, and how to plant.

DO Till or turn your soil one month before planting. Add lots of organic matter to your dahlia beds (aged manure, peat moss, leaf mold, and compost are excellent). Then till or turn your soil again a week before planting.

DON’T Dig a hole in hard ground to plant your tubers. Dahlias need lots of water. They send our thousands of tiny feeder roots and they need loose well-drained soil to do well. They will rot in standing water.

DON’T Use fresh manure, especially chicken manure, which will burn and damage or even kill your plants. (See DSO member Brant Giere for aged horse manure—free.)

DO Plant your dahlias after all chance of frost has passed. The earliest for northeast Ohio is May 15; the safest is May 31.
DON’T Plant too early. Dahlia tubers are susceptible to rotting if the soil is too wet. They can also freeze if a late frost hits their new shoots. Besides, they won’t really do anything until the soil warms to 60 degrees.

DO Plant in a sunny location with a minimum of 4 to 5 hours of sunlight per day; 6 to 8 hours is preferred—morning sun, afternoon shade.

DO Plant in well-drained soil.

DON’T Water when first planted.

DO Plant your tubers 4 to 6 inches deep, eyes up, cover with soil (2” - more later); 24 to 30 inches apart, next to a sturdy stake (at least 4 ft. above ground). Dahlia plants need to be staked and tied to keep them from collapsing especially during inclement weather.

DO Come to the March meeting to learn how and when to start them inside if you want them to have a head start!

Next month: Early Season Care Before Blooms

Jerry Moreno
Problem with Compacted Garden Soil?
Try Raised Beds!

Advantages

• Most gardeners find that raised beds are easier to maintain and promote better plant growth.
• Walking in a garden causes soil compaction, which can cause problems with drainage and oxygen availability to the roots. With a raised bed, you can plant, weed, and harvest without ever walking on the soil.
• Raised beds can be filled with high-quality soil and it’s easy to add compost or other organic matter.
• Use of water is more efficient in a raised bed.
• Raised beds warm up early in the spring and stay warm later in the fall.
• If you get a bad back and sore knees from gardening at ground level, a raised bed may put an end to those aches and pains.

Construction

• To install a raised bed, choose a sunny location; decide on the size and shape you want (4’x8’, say)
• Construct the frame with a nontoxic material such as stone, cinder blocks, bricks, untreated wood.
• Make sure the frame is between 12” and 16” high and is sturdy enough to hold together when filled with soil. If you use boards, they must be secured at the corners with metal braces or screws, nailed to a reinforcing block of wood inside the corners. Note that nailing into the ends of boards will probably split them.
• Fill the frame with a good quality lightweight soil mix and add a generous amount of compost.
STARTING DAHLIAS INDOORS

- In mid to late-April, fill a tray with moist potting soil.
- For a tuber that has a visible eye, be sure to write a tag for it and attach the tag to the tuber.
- Place the tuber in the soil with the crown elevated. The crown attaches to the neck of a tuber and bulges somewhat.
- Put several tubers in the tray. Allow enough space for growth, say 16-20 tubers per tray.
- Put the tray under lights and in a heated area. Some dahlia growers arrange to have bottom heat for the tray—but be very careful about an electrical short.
- In three or four weeks, you should see the whole tray of tubers growing well and with ample room. You’ll appreciate having tagged the tubers and also of having left space between them as you continue to the next step.
- Once the plants are five or six inches tall, they could be hardened off and planted in the garden. If there is a chance of frost or you still have soil preparation to do, you could put each plant in an individual pot, say eight inches, which will accommodate additional growth.

The above information was based on Welcome to the Wonderful World of Dahlias, an ADS publication, currently out of print.
SPECIAL NOTICE FOR MEMBERSHIPS
From John Bendokaitis

Please check the mailing label on this digest for one of these statements:

DUES ARE DUE or DUES ARE PAID

Please let me know if there is an error in my records.

MAIL FORM on NEXT PAGE and PAYMENT TO:
DSO MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN
JOHN R. BENDOKAITIS
17182 EASTVIEW DR
CHAGRIN FALLS, OHIO 44023

NOTE!!
If you are not a member of the American Dahlia Society, consider joining NOW. It is truly worth it!
Why? What are the benefits?

- You will get the CLASSIFICATION HANDBOOK
- You will get the colorful and informative ADS BULLETIN
- You will also receive the AMERICAN DAHLIA GUIDE TO GROWING AND CARING FOR DAHLIAS.
- You will be entitled to vote in election of ADS officers, and all other privileges of membership.
CHECK YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ON THE OTHER SIDE
SUBMIT ANY CHANGES BELOW

TO MAKE RENEWAL EASIER, SIMPLY TEAR OFF
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CHECK TO JOHN BENDOKAITIS

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