

DAHLIA DIGEST

DAHLIA SOCIETY OF OHIO

Since 1930

VOL. 2010 ISSUE 2

April, 2010



Friday, April 16 Meeting
7:30 p.m.



Busch Community Room
7501 Ridge Road, Parma
Just south of Pleasant Valley Road

PROGRAM

7:30 SHARP —8:00

**DVD on GROWING DAHLIAS—
from waking them up to storing**

8:00—8:15 REFRESHMENTS

8:15—9:45 TUBER AUCTION

President's Notes

Hi Gang,

Since we ran out of time last meeting to show the DVD on GROWING DAHLIAS from waking them up to storing them, we thought we would start our April meeting with it from 7:30 to 8:00.

So, if you are bringing tubers to auction, please try to arrive by 7:15 if possible. Be sure your tubers are clean and clearly marked. Don't forget to bring a flat or container to carry home whatever prize tubers you purchase. Thanks.

Be sure to take a look at the list of upcoming places where we are selling tubers and plants, and please sign up for a couple hours to "man the booth." Dave does a terrific job in organizing and setting up the sales areas at the various sites but it's not fair to him not to help. Thanks for helping. It's a lot of fun talking with people about their dahlia stories, and finding just the right tuber or plant for them!

I'm looking forward to seeing you at the meeting. Hope you find tubers that produce the best ever dahlias for you!

Jerry



**VISIT YOUR DSO WEBSITE
SHARON SWANEY, WEBMASTER
WWW.DAHLIASOCIETYOFOHIO.ORG**

Midwest Conference Show

The Midwest Dahlia Conference is comprised of 18 societies. We are hosting the Conference's 77th annual dahlia show coupled with our 80th one. The organizing committee met in February to get the planning started. There is a lot to do and we need YOUR help to make this one of the best shows ever.

IMMEDIATE WAYS YOU CAN HELP

- We are giving a Recipe Book on **D**inners (casseroles, one dish), **S**oups and sandwiches, **O**ther to all registrants to the Midwest Show. Please help by sending your favorite recipes in these categories to MaryAnn Moreno, 8232 Westhill Drive, Chagrin Falls 44023 or email **maryannjerry@windstream.net**

- There will be about 60 categories on the Court of Honor. Prizes are \$25 for each category. Think about donating \$25 for one of the categories of your choice. Your name will be recognized as the contributor as well as in whose name you are remembering, if any.
- There are lots of committees to volunteer your time and talent. One of the ones we will need lots of help on is Publicity. Jobs include taking a flyer to a nursery or store for them to display on their bulletin board; asking a nursery or company to sponsor one of the Court awards, or to give a donation, e.g., seed packet (about 70 of them) for the "goody bag" each gets. Other jobs will appear in future Digests. Let Jerry know what you would like to do. **JOBS ARE SO MUCH EASIER WHEN EVERYONE DOES A LITTLE BIT!**

DSO Sales and Shows in 2010



Tuber Sales/Auctions

April 16	DSO Meeting
April 24	Pettiti's Oakwood
May 14-16	Holden Arboretum
May 14-15	Rockefeller Garden
May 21	DSO Meeting

Shows

August 14-15	Cuyahoga County Fair
August 27-29	Mahoning Valley Dahlia Society
September 3	Geauga County Fair
Sept 4-5	Columbus Dahlia Society
SEPT 10-12	MIDWEST/DSO
Sept 18-19	East Liverpool Dahlia Society
Sept 23-26	National in Chattanooga, Tennessee
October 2-3	Pettiti's Oakwood

OFFICERS NEEDED

1. Recording Secretary

DSO needs YOU to take notes so that members who can't make the meetings know what is going on in their society. Please consider being Recording Secretary. Call Jerry. Thanks.

2. Second Vice President

Basically, the DSO Second Vice President is in charge of making sure Dave Cap does his job in organizing the shows. Now, how hard can that be? There's no-one around more efficient than Dave! Call Jerry to volunteer. Thanks.

OFFICERS-CHAIRS/PHONE NUMBERS

Jerry Moreno, President.....440-543-5658
Mike Weber, Past President.....440-647-3162
Sharon Swaney, First Vice President, Webmaster.330-562-3296
Your Name, Second Vice President.....xxx-xxx-xxxx
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MEETING DATES for 2010

Refreshments for April:

Shannon Fee
Barbara Hosta
Linda Vuletich



March 19	New Intros; Dave Cap on cuttings
April 16	Growing Dahlias; Annual Tuber Auction
May 21	Annual Plant Auction
June 18	On dahlia culture....tba
July 16	tba
August 20	tentative Final Planning Midwest Show
October 15	tba
November 19	Photo Contest; Demo on dividing/storing
December 4	Holiday Dinner Gathering

The JUDGE's Corner

Ron Miner baronminer@aol.com

Happy New Dahlia Season, everyone!

It seems like forever since I've prepared a judging note for the Digest. It has certainly been a tough time for the DSO and our judges! Paul and Lois will be sorely missed. Their contributions to the DSO and our shows were substantial. Lois joined us to judge whenever she could; Paul was virtually always there and ready to judge. We benefitted greatly from both their involvement and I'm confident that they also enjoyed the process.

I'm happy to announce that Mike Weber has completed the requirements to become an Accredited ADS Judge. Congratulations and thanks, Mike! Now we need 10 or 20 more of our DSO dahlia enthusiasts to do the same thing. There are relatively few requirements to be and/or to become a candidate judge. You need to be a member of the ADS and you need to grow and to show dahlias. I would want you also to invest some effort in studying the judging manual. The step from candidate to accredited judge is a bit more substantial. You need to judge regularly for three plus years, submit a judging examination with passing marks, attend a couple judging seminars, and judge seedlings. Fortunately we have a few candidate experienced judges ready for that step. Come on Mike, Barbara, John, and JoAnn!

The primary motivation for the special show section and judging seminar at Petitti's last fall was to lure new candidate judges to the show table. It worked and I was delighted to add Rob and Sharon to the candidate judges list.



Best OC at Petitti's in '09



Worst OC at Petitti's in '09.

Many of you will recall that I distributed seed from a series of open-centered cultivars to those interested in the project. At Petitti's we then had a special show section for open-centered seedlings and held a judging seminar to select the best and the worst of the bunch. This year I am thrilled to continue that process! Steve and Sandy Boley have graciously supplied me with several hundred seeds collected from Irish Pinwheel! The Boley's are premier hybridizers in the Pacific Northwest and their Irish Pinwheel won the award for the best Stellar entry in the Trial Gardens in 2007. We are extremely fortunate that Steve and Sandy were willing to share seeds from this exceptional cultivar with us. Steve, Sandy, Thanks! I should also note that the Boleys are the inspiration for this Petitti seedling judging project; they have sponsored a similar project at the Puget Sound DA for a number of years.



It is extremely likely that we will have a viable ADS winner among the plants grown from these seeds! Therefore, I anticipate that many of you won't be able to resist the opportunity to grow some. The only requirement for getting the seeds is a commitment to bring as many entries to the Petitti show as you have available in your garden at showtime! I hope that many of you will recognize this as a wonderful opportunity to grow some first-rate seedlings! Try it; I guarantee you'll love it!

We will probably also repeat the open-centered competition that provided an opportunity not only to judge but also to classify the entries. Please plan to save a corner of your garden to grow these seedlings and please plan to bring a few to the show at Petitti's in October.

We will talk about the judging of stellar dahlias in a future column. In the meantime, make sure you read the definition of stellar not only in the judging manual, but also in the last couple Classification and Handbook of Dahlias!

DAHLIA CULTURE

Last month we presented an article on taking cuttings. For our meeting, Dave also gave us a great live demo on his version of the subject. Getting ready to plant is this month's topic. Some of the following is from *Raising Beautiful Dahlias the Easy Way*, a publication of the American Dahlia Society, edited by Rick Peters.

Knowing the nutrient level of your garden is important in order to get the best growing results. The ideal time to have a test run on your soil is in the fall.

Regarding planting, if your soil is clay, you'll need to dig deeply or better yet, put in raised beds. Dahlias have to have good drainage or the tubers will rot. Cuttings will do better. If raised beds cannot be considered, then add four inches of composed organic matter to the top of the soil and dig it in well with a spade or rototiller. The organic matter will allow for better aeration for the roots of the plants and will help to promote drainage.



No matter whether your soil is clay, sandy or loam, organic matter will further improve the soil. Be sure however that the organic matter is well-composted as otherwise there could be problems with burning of the plants and fungal diseases.

Regarding fertilizers, you're likely to hear ten different suggestions from ten dahlia growers! Some use dilute amounts of fertilizer in their drip systems, others apply fertilizer to the soil and to the leaves of the plants (foliar feeding), while some throw on 12-12-12, others like bone and/or blood meal and other organics. A few use very little fertilizer at all. Of course, if you follow the directions of your soil test analysis, you have probably chosen the best way. Typically employ one or two dressings a season that are

specific to what your garden lacks.

Have you wondered what those three numbers mean on the bag of fertilizer? The first number is the percent of nitrogen; the second is the percent of phosphorus; and the third is the percent of potassium. So a 100-pound bag of 20-5-10 would contain 20 pounds of nitrogen, 5 pounds of phosphorus, and 10 pounds of potassium.



Nitrogen (N) is an important part of the enzymes, proteins, and chlorophyll of plants. Plants lacking nitrogen have yellowing leaves. Nitrogen is not held well by the

soil and tends to pass through with each watering. (Urea is pure nitrogen.)

Phosphorus (P) is necessary for strong root and flower development. Because phosphorus does not leach out of the soil readily, the opposite of nitrogen, you may want to use fertilizers with low phosphorus.

Potassium (K) is necessary for overall vigor, stress resistance, and stem strength. It is often supplied as "potash." It tends to be held by the soil, but not quite as strongly as phosphorus. With good amounts of organic matter in a garden (supplied from compost), potassium is most always adequate without much addition.

Organic fertilizers of blood meal and bone meal are not very potent and are very slow to release their goodness to the plants. However, they do contain many of the 16 essential elements that are necessary for all plants to grow.

A Primer on pH

What the heck is this pH thing anyway? I hear about it all the time but haven't a clue as to what it is.

A scale that measures the extent to which a soil is acidic or alkaline (basic) is called a pH scale. Why the letters pH is anyone's guess! (Who guesses H stands for Hydrogen ion activity in a solution?) But the scale runs from 0 (pure acid like battery acid, then lemon juice and vinegar less acidic) to 14 (pure lye with ammonia and Milk of Magnesium coming down the scale). What value would measure a neutral soil? 7? You're right! Can you name some things that would have a neutral pH? Right! Water, milk, with baking soda and sea water a bit on the basic side. Now comes the tricky part. The pH scale is logarithmic, not linear. So what does that mean?

Think of it this way. If the pH scale were linear, then a soil that has a pH of 9 would be one unit more alkaline than a soil with a pH of 8. However, the pH scale is not linear; it is logarithmic. That means that a soil with a pH of 9 is TEN TIMES more alkaline as a soil with a pH of 8, and TEN SQUARED or ONE HUNDRED times more alkaline than a soil with a pH of 7. Similarly, going the other direction, how much more acidic would a soil with a pH of 4 be compared to a soil with a pH of 5? Right, ten times more acidic! What about pH 4 compared to pH 6? Right again! 100 times more acidic. And now you know why your math teacher in school always got irritated when you asked "When am I ever going to use this math stuff anyway?"

Since few plants will survive in soil more acid than pH 4 or more alkaline than pH 8, the range that concerns most of us as gardeners is from pH 4 to pH 8. Dahlias prefer a slightly acidic soil around 6.5, as do most plants. So, do your best to maintain a pH of around 6.5 for your garden's soil.

CONTAINER GARDENING with DAHLIAS

There will be a CONTAINER GARDENING section in this year's Midwest Dahlia Show hosted by all of us DSO folks! The winner will be on the Court of Honor. The rules are simple: The container must contain at least 3 plants and at least one of them must be a dahlia. Oh yes, the container has to be transportable by one person, i.e., bathtubs are out!

Two of the favorite border or container type dahlias are Tout a Toi, a floriferous fully double waterlily formation with a warm bronze/yellow combination and Claudette, a free blooming 4" purple. A couple of the commercial growers offering border/container dahlias are Ferncliff Gardens and Swan Island. Steve Nowotarski also has several varieties. See the ADS Bulletin for purchasing details. Let's have lots of container garden entries this September!



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