

# JUDGES CORNER

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**Attention New Growers:** Dahlia shows and dahlia judges are a dahlia gardens' best friend!! Once you learn the basics of getting your dahlias staked and planted, what is the easiest way to get those plants to look their best? What is the easiest way to ensure that the blooms look spectacular? The answer, I believe, is to discuss your plants and blooms with your colleagues at our DSO or MVDS dahlia meetings. Better yet, bring some of your blooms to one of our dahlia shows. Ask your fellow exhibitors how they manage to get such a great stem or how they got that Pom to reflex all the way to the stem. Best of all, however, is to sign up to be a Candidate Judge. That will afford you the opportunity to learn the nuances of what makes a great dahlia—and how to get those features in your own blooms. To become a Candidate Judge, you only need to be a member of the American Dahlia Society.

The DSO has a long history of making the judging of our dahlias an enjoyable experience, one where each team member respects the views of his or her fellow judges. My predecessor, Glenn Ruth, made it clear that the objective of the judging process included not only identifying the best dahlias, but also enjoying the process and learning something in the process. I have done my best to make sure that Glenn's perspective continues to prevail in our dahlia shows. If you are a new grower, or if you are a highly experienced grower who wants to improve your expertise in growing great blooms, please let me know that you would like to join the DSO judging team!



The picture at left shows four teams discussing the attributes of four seedling entries. The evaluations have been a big part of the judging seminar at Petitti's over the last several years. At the completion of the process, the conclusions of each to the teams were shared and discussed as

a group. For the most part, the teams' results were very similar. Differences in opinion and different perspectives provided the most interesting and informative conversations!

**Attention DSO Judges:** If you are already a DSO judge, you know all about the foregoing benefits of being a part of our judging team. Your focus needs now to be on meeting the requirements for maintaining your status and on moving up to the next level of expertise and responsibility. The key step is moving from being a Candidate Judge to an Accredited (AC) Judge. Nancy Riopelle is the most recent judge to accomplish that step. Thanks and congratulations, Nancy!

The requirements are listed both on our DSO website and the ADS website. They include experience in judging and exhibiting in shows, participating in judging seminars, judging seedlings, and satisfactorily completing a judges examination. A number of you have only to complete the examination to move up to AC status. Please get to work to do that while it is still too cold to work outside in the garden!! Let me know if you need help in finding or getting started on the test.

**Flame Blends:** In preparing for the Petitti's Judging Seminar, I finally figured out that I was guilty of misunderstanding how to determine Flame Blends. The wording of the definition for Flame Blends has evolved in recent years. The definition in my head was the one from the 2017 Classification and Handbook of Dahlias (CHD). It refers to "blends of high brilliance" and cites the color chips required for the cultivar to be a Flame Blend. One could infer from that wording that the judge could determine that the colors in a particular cultivar were not of high brilliance and that the color should be a Light or a Dark Blend. That was my understanding, and that perspective was and is incorrect. If the two colors you determine for a specific cultivar are both listed in the Flame Blend definition in the 2019 CHD, it is a Flame Blend. There is no judgement of brilliance involved. The 2018 definition appropriately leaves out the high brilliance comment. The 2019 definition adds this statement: "All blend cultivars possessing these color chips are Flame Blends." This last change reflects the exchange of opinions that occurred at the National Show during the Classification Committee meeting.

I may have influenced your understanding of Flame Blends. Please be aware that my previous perspective was incorrect! The

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bottom line is that if both colors on the cultivar are listed in the Flame Blend list, it is a Flame Blend. There is no judgement involved.

**Flame Blends at our Midwest Show:** There were lots of Flame Blends at our Midwest Show. I couldn't resist taking a closer look at some of them shown below.



Spanish Dancer, above left, and Rock Run James, above right, show the best combination of good contrast and a good balance of the two colors.



Baron Katie, above left, should probably be penalized in competition for the subtle nature of the yellow component of the blend. Hilltop Kemper, above center, has a similar problem and the cultivar might better be classified as a bicolor. AC Abby, above right, might have fallen in the category of fitting the old model of "low brilliance." Nevertheless, remember that brilliance doesn't matter, just the color chips as explained earlier.