

The JUDGE's Corner

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I was sorry to miss the last meeting. That night was Barbara and my 50th anniversary of graduation from high school. I would have preferred to go to the meeting, but ...

I need to thank Jerry for handling the distribution of the seeds at the meeting. I got an early start on the Boley seeds and got 8 to germinate. I hope you all have similar success! I will discuss judging of stellar and open-centered seedlings later, but we better start with a broader perspective on judging.

Judging in shows is different from judging seedlings in a number of ways. First, when you begin the judging of a show, you are usually able to compare the attributes of entries that are in the same class. For example, they may be all BB FD R. Usually, there are significant differences in quality among the entries. And, occasionally, it is pretty obvious which of the entries is the best. On the other hand, what would you do if one of the good entries has very good color but is top-facing and another sits at 45° but has pretty distinct fading on the top of the bloom? I hope that most of you would say something like: "Top-facing is a minor fault on an attribute that is only worth 5 points and fading can be a major fault on an attribute that is worth 20 points. Thus, unless the fading is almost invisible, the winner should be the top facing bloom—assuming, of course, that all other attributes are equal." If that is what you said, you are right! The point, of course, is that practice and skill in judging seedlings and the associated familiarity with point scoring are very important elements for successful show judging. The values of the various attributes are as follows:

Color	22
Form	28
Substance	15
Stem	10
Foliage	10
Bloom Position	5
Uniformity / Floriferousness	5
Distinction	5

It is not essential that you know each of those values, without needing to look them up, but it is essential that you have in your mind a good feel for the relative importance of form and uniformity, for example, and that you know where to find the exact values in the Classification and Handbook of Dahlias.

We have the wonderful good fortune of having a Trial Garden, sponsored by our friends in the Mahoning Valley Dahlia Society, virtually next door in Youngstown. You should certainly take advantage of that situation to do some seedling judging there when you have the opportunity to do so. I do! We will also work with Harriet Chandler, the new Trial Garden

Director, and the MVDS to develop opportunities to judge in the garden as a group. There are specific requirements for



judging seedlings in order to make the steps from Candidate to Accredited and from Accredited to Senior judge. While the Trial Garden and the Seedling Bench Evaluation at our shows are ideal times to work on those requirements, we can also arrange other approaches to meet those needs. Let me know if you would like to pursue these alternative approaches.

This year is an excellent one to start or to move up from the Candidate Judging level. Having the Midwest Show here in Cleveland will make it very easy to interact with judges from across the country. Exposure to a broad range of perspectives is an important element of your judging experience.

I also think the two seedling events and the associated judging seminar will make the show at Petitti's as much fun as our Midwest Show! Plan on joining in the fun of growing some seedlings with great potential!