

The JUDGE's Corner

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The season is underway! I rediscovered a reason to enjoy the open-centered cultivars; I had several blooming in my garden when we got back from vacation last week. They extend the season since they are, in general, several weeks earlier than their fully double cousins.

Our first opportunity to show off our dahlias will be August 14 at the Cuyahoga Fair. If you've never shown a dahlia, this is the perfect place to start: easy and convenient staging, free entry to the fair, and a highly appreciative audience! Surely you will have a couple blooms you would be willing to share with the fair-goers! If you are planning to judge the show, did you read the Guide to Judging Dahlias over the winter? If not, now is the time to do it. Remember the story of Mr. Big Shot (BS) and Miss Milktoast I wrote in this column a couple years ago? The bottom line was that knowledge of the Judging Manual outweighs the confidence and bluster of a self-proclaimed "expert."

The next local judging opportunity will be at our Midwest Show on Sept. 11. All DSO judges should participate inasmuch as this will be an excellent time to interact with judges from all over the Midwest. This has the potential to expand your perspective and your skills substantially! Besides, we will need all our judges to meet the requirements of a big show!

One highlight of last year's judging season was the process of judging the open-centered seedlings at Petitti's. We had some very good quality seedlings as well as some excellent candidates for the worst seedling award! We will repeat that best open-centered seedling competition at the Petitti Show this year. None of my first year OC seedlings germinated this year and I don't know why. However, I kept some of the best from last year; I hope you did the same thing. Please bring a few to the show! Bring those cultivars with hairy stems, particularly! If we have enough, we will separate them into a different class and find the best cultivar with hairy stems!

The other seedling competition at Petitti's promises to be even more exciting because it is very likely that we will have a

few show quality cultivars among the seeds/seedlings provided by Steve and Sandy Boley! The source of their seeds was their wonderful new introduction, Irish Pinwheel, ST FL. I hope you are having good success with those plants in your garden! Remember that the only requirement for getting those seeds was that you bring bloom(s) to the show (s)! Of course,

for those of you who are new to showing dahlias, I hope that when you start showing blooms you will also want to learn more about how they are judged. The seminar and the



joint judging process for those ST seedlings will be an excellent way to do so! Join the fun!

The Stellar form is among the newest to the ADS and the ideal definition for the form is still evolving. Please read the most recent definition in your 2010 Classification and Handbook of Dahlias. The key points in the definition are narrow, pointed, partially involute ray florets recurving toward the stem with “open space” between them. The depth should be greater than half the diameter. The modification in this definition was implemented to better separate the ideal ST from the ideal FD definition. Further, the new ST definition aims toward Alloway Candy as the ideal example to envision in comparing forms, rather than some of the more recent ST cultivars with great depth and a ton of ray florets, like Camano Pet. Of course, adherence to the ideal form is just one relatively small piece of the evaluation of an entry (5 points out of a total of 28 designated to form). (But you already knew that, right?)

I look forward to seeing you at the Cuyahoga Fair!