

The JUDGE's Corner

Ron Miner - baronminer@aol.com

Happy Spring everyone! Even though there are days that seem a lot like winter, the days are getting longer and better weather is on the way.

I hope that many of you have good tubers from second and third year seedlings from our Petitti judging seminars projects. I always used to be most anxious about the box of tubers labeled "seedlings." If there were losses there, they couldn't be replaced at the auction. That is why I frequently had other growers grow and keep a couple of my favorite seedling plants. I would recommend that you do the same thing if a couple of the seedlings we've been growing and distributing over the last couple years are still looking like good ADS candidates. Share a couple tubers with your buddy or give them to me. I'll be glad to grow and store one or two spares for you. We will have a special section for those seedlings at Petitti's again this year.



My 2009 Seedling (S R/y, 9606) was best S at the 2010 National show

I finally quit procrastinating, got out the Senior Judges test, and started through it. I hope you've already done that! If not, now is the time to get going. I'm sure you will find the material to be very familiar and the process a lot easier than you've been anticipating! The judging requirements and the judging tests are all available on the ADS website, www.dahlia.org. I also emailed each of our judges a summary version of the requirements and the relevant test last fall. Please send me your test answers by email if possible (that way they won't get lost!) asap. If you want to be a judge, please let me know by email and I will get the information to you. You won't need to start out with a test, just a lot of dahlia fun! (I try hard to adhere to one of the key lessons our late mentor, Glenn Ruth, provided: judging dahlias should be a fun process!)

The judging process depends on knowledge gleaned from the Guide to Judging Dahlias, the Classification and Handbook of Dahlias, and the judging Score Cards. You should review those documents in

detail each year. Completing the judging test will provide a good reason to do that! Of course, that 'book learning' must be supplemented by a lot of hands-on judging experience both in shows and in the trial gardens. Some of the best lessons are learned in judging experiences away from 'home' at a National or Conference show where you will be teamed with judges with different, often broader, judging exposure.

Show judging is sometimes easier than seedling judging because it can be easier to draw comparisons between entries than to develop an absolute evaluation of an entry based on your understanding of the judging criteria.



Barbara, judging with Jerry Landerholm, Betty Burton and two other judges at the National Show in Chattanooga

Nevertheless, the judging of seedlings is the best way to develop an understanding of the relative values of the various attributes. It is where you must penalize and reward entries based on the familiar (I hope!) characteristics of Form (28%), Color (22%), (Note that is 50% already!), Substance (15%), Stem (10%), Foliage (10%), Bloom Position (5%), Uniformity (SBE) or Floriferousness (TG) (5%), and Distinction (5%). With that knowledge and experience well in hand, you are then able to compare the relative merits and faults of entries in the same class in a show on a very sound basis.

For example, if one of two entries has a subtle form fault and its competition has a subtle stem fault and excellent form, it should be clear that the form fault is a bigger problem than the stem fault. Of course, few comparisons are that simple and it is often necessary to consider strengths and weaknesses in most of the above attributes to come up with the best in class.

Please get those seedlings from '09 and '10 up and running to be included in the Petitti competition and seminar! We plan to add some new 1st seedlings, too!

Ron