

Judge's Corner

Ron Miner

This column is a departure from others; I'm on vacation! :-) Actually, I'm caught away from my computer and all my usual resource materials, pictures, etc. We are spending Easter with Jeff and his family in California.

It is, however, ok, because it gives me an opportunity to reinforce the importance of the virus research work underway by Prof. Hanu Pappu at WSU. Jim and Carl Chuey's donation to WSU in support of the virus project there has precipitated new research that I consider to be a watershed change in our ability to make a real difference in control of virus in our gardens. Their donation has also sparked a wave of communication among dahlia growers. The essence of the change is that we can now identify, with confidence, the presence of virus in our gardens. That identification is based simply on the appearance of the foliage of our plants. In the past, I, and no doubt many of you, blamed the virused appearance on poor vigor in the plant and responded with more vigorous fertilizing and/or addition of minor element soil amendments to our gardens. Dr. Pappu's counsel in that situation is to **forget it!**



The plant has a virus. Pull it out and throw it away.

The other half of that watershed change is the additional knowledge that some dahlias (hopefully "many," soon) do not have virus. Thus, pulling out virused plants and leaving plants with a healthy appearance will lead us toward virus-free gardens! I said here a couple months ago that the relationship to judging is straightforward. In contrast to some of my earlier counsel, you must penalize the appearance of virus!

The bottom line is heartfelt thanks to Jim and to Carl Chuey for their commitment to the virus research project. Carl's legacy may well be felt by all of us who love dahlias!

Ron