

The JUDGE's Corner

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Last month we discussed the determination of a seedling's form. The key elements of the successful classification of a seedling are careful examination of the shape of the ray florets, determination of the distribution of the florets on the bloom, and careful reading of the definitions of ideal forms in the CHD (American Dahlia Society *Classification and Handbook of Dahlias*). Piece of cake, eh?!

Once we've determined the form, we need to talk about evaluating it. Form's 28 points are divided into 5 areas of evaluation: symmetry, contour, development, true form, and size proportion. First, let's take a look at some form faults.

Form—28

Symmetry - 5
Contour - 5
Development - 5
True Form - 5
Size Proportion - 8

Symmetry involves the overall appearance of the blooms (are they round?) and the nature of the centers of the bloom (are they round?). The bloom on the right illustrates a fault common to large blooms. Bearding is a fault where the florets on the bottom half of the bloom are longer than the florets in the top half. A penalty of 1 point (out of 5) for this observation of bearding yields a failing score for symmetry (80%). Note, however, that the center is round. So, a total penalty of about 1 point is probably appropriate.



Can you spot the symmetry problem on this bicolor? Right, that center sure isn't round! This bull nose is a pretty extreme example of a fairly common problem. Here again, this bloom should not achieve a passing score for symmetry with 60% more appropriate than 80% in this case.





This Single form bloom illustrates another basic symmetry problem. It is simply not round. I would rank the symmetry problem on this entry as the worst and the bull nose second worst among the three examples.

Contour is the second element of form and involves the way in which the ray florets combine to make the bloom. Take another look at the bicolor on the previous page. From this angle, the gaps at 6 and 11 o'clock are pretty glaring, aren't they! The ray florets are not uniformly distributed around the bloom.

Next, compare the contour of the right and left sides of this white Water Lily (WL) seedling. In addition to the gaps at 7 and 9 o'clock, the left side of the bloom has fewer florets than the right. The contour problems on this WL are severe enough that a score of 50% (-2.5 point penalty) may even be generous.



Development is a key issue in judging seedlings on the bench at a show. It also carries over to show judging in general. The judging manual states: "The judge must remember that the mature bloom at the peak of development with some faults merits first choice over an immature "clean" bloom." Violation of this principle, in my opinion, is one of the most common errors in show judging. You must take great care to avoid picking that "clean," but young(!) bloom over its fully mature competition. In a Trial Garden setting however, you need to work with the blooms available and development isn't an issue.

True form addresses the question of how closely the ray florets and their arrangement conform to the ideal definition in the CHD. This pink FD seedling has florets that are not involute enough to make it a Ba, but they are also not “generally flat,” as stated in the FD definition. This seedling probably deserves a failing score for true form; i.e., a penalty of 1 or 1.5 points.



Ideal size proportion is specifically cited in each of the ideal definitions in the CHD. When you are evaluating a seedling, measurement of depth and diameter are key parts of its classification. Shallow blooms are the more common problem, like the seedling on the right, but some blooms, like this beautiful Hy Mom



below, have depth greater than the diameter. Both are faults; but, in my view, the shallow bloom has a substantially greater fault than the great depth shown in this Hy Mom.

Remember that one of the requirements to become a judge is to bring blooms to a show. The Cuyahoga Fair is a great place to start! There will be lots of help available to help you to get started.