

The JUDGE's Corner

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I hope you are having some success in growing those few anemone seedlings that we did succeed in getting to germinate! The odds have sure been against them. I've had an unusually heavy loss of dahlias this year, I assume because I just can't irrigate like mother nature. As of this writing, we've had less than 1.5" of rain since the middle of May. That plus ongoing temperatures in the 90's makes for tough gardening. (Maybe, some day, we will have perfect weather; then what will I do to explain the problems?) I need also to report that two out of my three anemone seedlings look a lot like zinnias. I tried to blame one of our buddies who helped grow the seedlings for being a comedian—but they all claim innocence.

We've already talked a bit about the extent to which the anemone seedlings conform to the most recent definition in the CHD. Clearly that is an important part of our discussion with this year's Petitti seedling contest and judging seminar. Do you remember how important "true form" is in the context of point scoring? Form counts for 28 points but I'm sure you are all thinking that isn't all for true form—and you are right. Page 40 in the Guide to Judging Dahlias provides a start on the answer to the question. It says that of the 28 points assigned to Form, 5 are for "True Form." Additional information on Form can be found on pages 17 and 18. The reason that it is important to read the description there is that it becomes clear that the table on page 40 is basically relevant to fully double blooms. We are left on our own to translate the distribution of points to the other types. More on that later.

While you have the book out, take a look at the other elements of Form on page 40. Symmetry counts for 5 points. Is the bloom round? How about the dome. Is it centered in the bloom and is it round? How about the ray florets? Are they uniform in size around the bloom? Is their spacing uniform?

Contour also counts for 5 points and, at least for me, is far less intuitive than symmetry. In a fully double bloom, contour relates to the overall shape of the bloom and the arrangement of the florets around the involucre. Florets should spiral out from the center of the bloom and increase in size toward the back of the bloom. Faults are gaps or irregular distribution of the florets. Now, how does that translate to the anemone form? Perhaps best (or only?) in the dome. Are the dome florets regularly and uniformly arranged around the center of the bloom? If they appear ragged or vary in height or distribution, a penalty for contour should be assessed.

The next item in that list is Development and it counts for 5 points.

That basically asks you to assess the extent to which the blooms are at their peak of maturity. For an anemone, you want those disc florets to be tubular in shape and uniformly open at their tips. The ray florets should be flat and fresh in appearance.

True Form comes next on the list and you need now to closely examine those characteristics that make the entry an anemone (basically the dome and the ray florets) and make a determination of how well those characteristics conform to that ideal definition in the CHD. Those issues were in the last column and I won't repeat them here. Just remember that you are trying to determine the elevation of that new cultivar on the anemone mountain.

That last item on the Form table on page 40 is a problem, isn't it. "Size Proportion" refers to the depth of the bloom. We aren't much concerned about the height of the dome and can only conclude that this item is not relevant to fully double blooms. My suggestion is to consider those 8 points as though they were distributed over the other 4 characteristics of form. That would make a serious symmetry fault, for example, a little higher in value than it would have been if symmetry were only worth 5 points. Don't worry if that is not crystal clear to you; it is a pretty subtle point!

Let's walk through the evaluation of Form on a couple examples from Bill Johnson's (Australian) garden. This yellow AN has great color doesn't it, but it also has some Form problems. Symmetry may be the key issue. The bloom is not round and the ray florets are



not uniformly distributed around the bloom. I suppose you could also take some issue with the contour of the dome—but that is a relatively subtle problem. If we were to base our 28 points on this picture alone, I would say that we should take the majority of those 5 (or 7) symmetry points as a penalty.

What do you



think of this second example? I think it is clear that the key Form problem here is True Form. I wonder about the ray florets. Are there any? Note that the CHD definition does not ask for those ray florets to be flat. Thus, one could argue that these fully involute (tubular!) florets at the back of the bloom constitute the ray florets. On the other hand, I would be sympathetic to the argument this seedling might better be classified as a fully double novelty, NX.

I've cropped out portions of Bill's photo on the left; ignore the partial pictures in the corners. This bloom may be my favorite among all of Bill's I've seen. What's your reaction to it—and why? You just like it, right!? Those ray florets are spectacular and the white tubular dome provides a wonderful contrast. In my mind, that general impression means it has Distinction!

(Long story there, maybe we'll discuss that one

this winter.)

Anyway, we're talking about Form. I included this picture because it illustrates one of the issues discussed above—Development. Did you notice that those disc florets are not uniformly mature? Those tubular florets in the center of the bloom need a couple more days. I would suggest that fault is pretty minor, perhaps a point or two on this bloom. What other Form faults do you see? The biggest one for me is the nonuniformity of those gorgeous ray florets. Since the bloom manages to achieve a round appearance, the penalty here might best be taken from True Form because the definition asks for the ray florets to be uniform and regularly arranged. You could also argue that the ray florets on this cultivar have Contour and that arrangement fault belongs there!

Well, I hope that isn't more than you wanted to know about judging the form on AN seedlings. The key here is to enjoy growing those new cultivars in your garden and (hopefully!) finding a couple that look like that bi-color above! You will come to be comfortable with discussing the details of the merits of those blooms with experience and with re-reading the judging manual (like I had to do about six times to write this column!).