

## The JUDGE's Corner

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Hooray; planting time is at hand! Isn't it great to actually be back in the process of actively gardening? We get to play in the dirt! We have all that potential for great flowers and great seedlings out there in front of us with none of the insect or heat or cold or rain or drought or other problems to worry about! They will be with us soon enough; enjoy the moment!

I got a head start on one of those future problems by looking for virus symptoms on the plants that were big enough to have foliage before I put them in the ground. Five of them didn't even get into the ground! The discoloration and pattern on the leaves were not nearly as obvious as the discoloration on some of Prof. Pappu's examples of virus, but it seemed clear that those five plants had a problem. It was sure easier not to plant them than to plant them and then have to dig them up and try

to replace them later. I plan to save them in the pots for a while (away from the garden!) to see if they continue to show virus symptoms. Setting aside my only Hamari Accord was a little tough, but I wasn't confident that it was ok. It only hurt for a little while. :-)

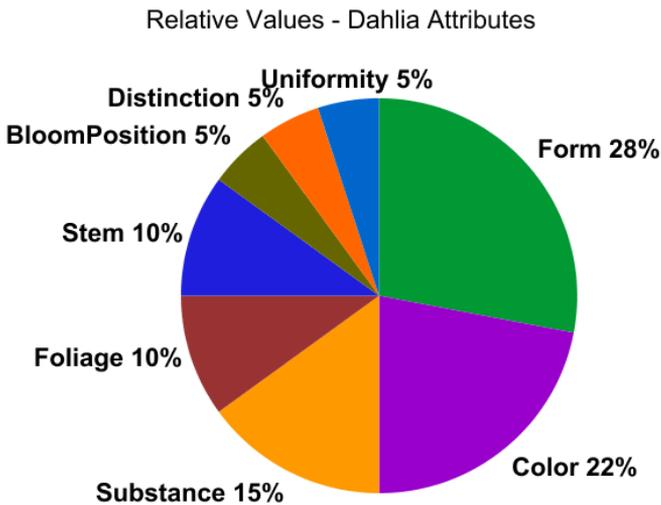
Last month, we talked about the broad perspective of show judging. Some of the basics are as follows: 1) Use your knowledge of



the Judging Manual to contribute effectively to your judging team. Provide your perspective on your observations of the entries; listen respectfully to other team members' views; disagree based on your knowledge of the manual; respect and 'own' the conclusions of the team. 2) Award ribbons based on the relative merits of the entries, not on some sense of perfection. In general, it will be appropriate to give first place ribbons in every class and every section. In those rare instances where no first is given, a note should be written on the entry tag explaining the problem with the entry. 3) Be aware (and beware!) of your own prejudices. Remember, for example, that all the colors in the color chart and all forms are of equal merit! Avoid studying others' entries during staging; you might need to judge those blooms later in the day. Never judge or comment on your own entries.

The Guide to Judging Dahlias, our judging manual, provides everything you need to know in order to be able to work with and contribute your share to your judging team. You need to read it and use it in judging situations to help grow your understanding of judging. Perhaps you did not agree with or understand a conclusion reached by your judging team. After the show, go find the relevant portion of the GJD and read up on the issue. Ask me or your judging captain about it at the next opportunity. Get comfortable with the team's bottom line—or straighten out their error!

Differences of opinion on the best entry in a class usually result from 1) different faults being observed by the judges involved and 2) different ideas on the relative importance of the various faults. The former issue, regarding different judges finding different faults in the entries, can largely be minimized by the team approach to judging. When the faults are discussed by the team, everyone becomes aware of all the faults identified by the team members. The latter issue, regarding the relative importance of the faults, is at least partly addressed by the numerical values of the attributes used in scoring seedlings. The pie chart shown on the next page illustrates the relative values of those attributes. Those values serve as the basic link between judging in a show and



judging on the seedling bench. The numbers serve to help prioritize the relative importance of faults.

The other factor that influences the relative importance of a fault is its severity. A severe foliage fault, for example, can outweigh a relatively subtle color fault even though color has a lot higher value than foliage. On the other hand, a severe color fault generally determines the choice between entries. In making decisions among entries in a class, you need to weigh not only the severity of the faults but also the relative importance of the attribute.

Experience is the best source of wisdom for determining the severity of faults; but some examples may help shed some light on fault severity. The severity of a fault in a bloom is based on 1) its extent and 2) its degree. Is the fault isolated to a single ray floret on the back of the bloom or is it present throughout the bloom? Is there a single wolf petal or are they all over the bloom? Those questions relate to the extent of the fault. Is the fault subtle, barely noticeable at arms length, or is it blatant? Do you see it as you approach the table? The answers to these questions help determine

the degree of the fault. If it is isolated, it is low in extent. If it is pervasive it is large in extent. If it is subtle, it is low in degree. If it is blatant, it is high in degree.

The symmetry of the center of a bloom may be the most important characteristic of our show dahlias. It is probably the best place to start the process of evaluating a class at the show. The pictures on the left illustrate differences in the degree of a common fault. The asymmetry in the center of the bloom in the upper picture is blatant enough that you would seldom even see it at a dahlia show. It is often called a bull nose and the degree of the fault is great enough for the fault to be severe.



The center of the white ball is also asymmetrical but the degree of the fault is much less than the one above it. The “center” consists of a line running from 10 o’clock to 4 o’clock. While I would not call that fault severe, it is great enough that you would not usually find that bloom on the head table.

Mixed form is another form fault we commonly find in our dahlias. The pictures on the left and top of the next page illustrate a difference in the extent of the mixed form fault. The bloom here has a couple pretty obvious florets whose form is not semi-cactus. One is near the center of the bloom at about 4 o’clock. The other one is pointed straight at us near the center of the picture. The extent of the fault is





very low and the bloom could probably even win in its class.

In this bloom, it is hard to pick out individual florets with mixed form, because there is a broad mix of flat, revolute, and twisted ray florets all around the equator of the bloom.

That is, the mixed form fault is extensive and therefore severe in the bicolor bloom (a seedling that probably never saw a show table).

Another key ingredient in show judging is understanding faults and using appropriate fault terminology. One of the easiest ways to begin the process of familiarizing yourself with the various dahlia faults is to look at the backs of the ADS Seedling Evaluation Scorecards. They were prepared with just that idea in mind—to remind the seedling judges to check for the presence or the absence of all of the potential faults in a new seedling. In a show judging situation, you are not searching for all possible faults, you are comparing a group of blooms to each other. Nevertheless, those sheet backs are very useful summaries of the faults you will encounter when judging a show. They are included in the back of your *Classification and Handbook of Dahlias*. Take a look at pages 101 and 103 of the 2015 CHD now if it is sitting nearby. Page 101 provides a listing of the positive and negative characteristics of each of the attributes. Page 103 provides more of the strategy to use in coming to a conclusion on the size of the penalty to impose for various faults. You might want to read down through that list before you start on a judging assignment. (You might also want to review the list when you are making a close call!)

If you didn't get any of the seeds I distributed at the May meeting, send me an email and I will bring any extras to the June meeting. We will use them at the October Petitti judging seminar. I anticipate that we will want to find not only the best but also the worst of the 2nd generation Blossom Gulch seedlings. More on that later!

*Ron*