

The JUDGE's Corner

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Thanks

I need to start with a couple ‘thanks’ to the folks who invest so much time and effort in getting our season off to a great start. Mike Weber and Doc Hemminger are the guys responsible for the beautiful plants that are the basis for our plant sales at Holden and Rockefeller as well as the DSO auction. Dave Cap and his crew, of course, actually make the sales happen! Thanks very much, ladies and gentlemen! The results of your efforts are wonderful plants that are greatly appreciated.

Growing the plants and taking cuttings were more complicated this year as a consequence of our efforts to provide “G1” plants for the DSO and Midwest auctions.

Tony Evangelista is the guy who made that bit of offense possible. He provided the G1 tubers to Mike from the plants in his garden that tested free of virus last year. Professor Pappu has argued that using tubers from plants that test to be free of virus (G1 tubers) is the best way to get plants that are free of virus in the subsequent year. Our data from 2015 and 2016 support that premise. Thanks, Tony, for making it possible to substantially expand that G1 project!

Thanks also go out to those of you who purchased G1 plants at the auction. Remember that we will be organizing a shipment of leaves from those G1 plants for testing at WSU. Our objective is to further understand the probability of a G1 tuber to yield a G1 plant the following year. The opportunity to have WSU perform those tests at no cost to us is a direct result of the ongoing support for the virus work by Jim Chuey and the Scheetz-Chuey Foundation. Thanks, Jim.

Take care of the G1 plants you purchased—as well as the rest of your plants—by sterilizing your tools with a 10% bleach solution every time you move from one plant to the next. It is a great habit to acquire. I keep a fresh solution on my bench whenever I'm working on my dahlias so that it's easy to dip my cutting



tools whenever I use them. An old Gatorade bottle works well for holding the solution and is easy to replace every couple hours.

Color!

I've invested the last couple columns in a discussion of one of the most important attributes of dahlias: Color. It is the first item on the seedling score sheet and comprises 22% of the points assigned to determine the quality of dahlias. Probably more important, however, is that our dahlias exhibit bright and bold colors and color combinations that grab our attention and fascinate both dahlia growers and the public.

When you are in any judging situation, whether at a show or in a Trial Garden, it is very important that you do a good job in evaluating the quality of the color in the entries you are evaluating. Remember that there is a handy summary of attributes to consider on the back of the seedling score cards and also in the back of the Classification and Handbook of Dahlias. (The size of the font in the CHD is about the same as it is here!)

Note that if your entries display a combination of colors, you need to add other characteristics for consideration. The key one, that we discussed last month, is the uniformity of the other color (s) on the ray florets and around the bloom.

We covered blushes, blends, and bicolors last month. Variegated dahlias are the last of the color combinations recognized by the ADS.

Variegated

Variegated is one of the 15 official ADS colors. The requirements for good variegated quality are pretty similar to those for bicolors. While a blend requires a gradual transition from one color to the next, bicolors and variegated blooms require a sharp separation between the colors. As you might expect, my favorite variegated flower

DESIRABLE

- Clear
 - Bright
 - Pure
 - Sparkling
 - Lustrous
-
- Smooth transition between colors
 - Harmonious or contrasting colors
-
- Even distribution of 2nd color
 - Good contrast
 - Sharp/distinct separation
 - Adequate amount 2nd color

- Uniform Color

- SBE Bruising
- SBE Insect Injury
- SBE Mildew

UNDESIRABLE

Overall

- Dull/Gray
- Impure
- Blotchy/Coarse
- Streaked
- Veined

Blends

- Uneven
- Clashing colors

Bicolors and Variegated

- Uneven
- Poor contrast
- Bleeds
- Inadequate 2nd color

Multiple Blooms

- Bracts
- Contrasting obvious petaloids
- Wolf petals

Other Undesirable Faults

- Conspicuous bracts
- Fading, bruising
- Spotting

was Princess Paige, named after my only granddaughter. :-) I have lost all my stock of it, so let me know if you have some! It did a good job of meeting the sharp separation between colors. Do you see some other faults here? The key one is that there are 6 or 7 ray florets that have stripes of red along with the flecks of red. That is, the distribution of the second color is not uniform throughout the bloom. It appears that there may also be a white ray floret at the top of the bloom and another that is a bit short of red flecks at just past 3 o'clock on the face of the bloom.



If this were typical of an entry in the Trial Garden, how many of the 22 color points would you deduct? Start with the consideration of passing or failing as you consider that question. On the plus side the separation of colors is very good and there are no wolf petals. On the down side the distribution of colors is uneven on some petals. A passing score requires a deduction of 3.3 points or less. My thought is that this bloom is not representative of a passing score for variegated color. Bummer. I would rate it at -4 or -5 for color.

Some of you may recall the seedling on the left. It was one of my favorites among the original Blossom Gulch seedlings we grew in 2013. It is a good way to wrap up our discussion of variegated color.



Look back to the criteria for Bicolors and Variegated color on the previous page. This one gets high marks for “Even distribution of the 2nd color.” I suppose you might penalize it a bit for the fact that some of the flecks are streaks. However, the streaks are largely uniformly distributed

among the flecks. There is also “Good contrast” between the flecks and the base color of the ray florets and a “Sharp/distinct separation” between the colors. Is there an “Adequate amount 2nd color?” The “Guide to Judging Dahlias” does not provide any guidance on what is “adequate.” It may fall a little short of “ideal” but it is plenty adequate to tell it is variegated. Consequently, my thought on a score for the variegation is high, probably close to no deduction.

There is more to the Color story for this seedling, isn't there?



What is the base color of the ray florets?

What is the color of the petaloids? If we were somehow able to erase the red flecks, what would be left on the ray florets? I suggest that we would find a blend of yellow at the base of the florets and dark pink or orange at the outside ends. We would need to identify the best matching color chips to figure out which blend is the correct one for this bloom. As I recall, it was a Light Blend. What is the quality of that blend? “In blends, two or more evenly

merging harmonious or pleasingly contrasting colors should be apparent.” (GJD, p.12) The two colors aren't particularly “apparent” with the variegations all over both. On the other hand, there is certainly a “Smooth transition between colors” and, at least to me, the colors are “Harmonious.” What would we deduct for the subtlety of the colors in the blend on the ray florets? My thought would be that the penalty should be small; maybe .5 or 1 point.

Next, the petaloids. They are also probably best characterized as variegated; but the two petaloids in the picture sure don't have a nice uniform distribution of the red flecks! Inasmuch as the petaloids are a relatively insignificant part of the color of the bloom, my thought here would be that the penalty for showing poor variegation would be small, too; perhaps 1 point.

Now that we have identified all of the elements of color on this seedling, can you classify it? The first steps are easy, right: CO V. Next, we need the dominant part of the ray florets: LB. I got YL18/OR18 last year. With red variegations, the basic color becomes: V LB YL18/OR18 / RD 24. Now add the variegated petaloids to get: **CO V LB YL18/OR18 / RD24 / v wh0/rd24!** Easy, right!

Ron