

Color Determination on Open-Centered Cultivars

Last month we covered the basics of the color of fully double cultivars. My plan was to move on this month to the classification of color for the open-centered cultivars. It has been five years since we undertook the Blossum Gulch project of growing open-centered seedlings from seeds supplied by Kathy Iler. I hope that those of you who participated in that project enjoyed it as much as I did! The bad news is that those plans for that column never came to fruition as a result of a lot of other complications—including a high school graduation in California (Congratulations, Bryce!)

The good news is that I wrote a lot about the color of those seedlings around that time and still have those columns largely in hand. Please forgive, therefore, a repeat of selected portions of a 2014 column on determining the color of open-centered cultivars!

In last month's column, we talked about one of the most important characteristics of our dahlias, both from the point of view of evaluation and from the point of view of public interest — color! Did you all get out your 2014 Classification and Handbook of dahlias (CHD) and look at the new ADS procedure for classifying open-centered dahlias on pages 6 and 7? Following that procedure, I asked you to generate the classification of the seedling below left. The bloom shows the characteristics of both an orchid and a collarette; i.e., it has both fully involute ray florets and petaloids. This year, that makes it an Orchette (OT), the newest of the ADS' various forms. Until this year, the cultivar would have been classified as a novelty, NO, and the color class would have been problematic! Even as an OT, the color required a new system to classify the color, a procedure that Lou Paradise describes on pages 6 and 7 of the

CHD. We start with the fact that the color class is determined on the basis of the reverse of the ray florets, as it does in orchids. I would like to be able to take a look at the back of the flower in the picture, but without being able to do that, what would you call the color class for this seedling? We can see both red and white, so the options are probably DB or BI. The transition between the colors is not sharp, so I



would opt for DB W/R, suggesting that the majority of the ray floret we can see is white, not red. Next comes the color of the face of the ray florets (just like in an orchid), preceded by a “/” and in lower case letters; i.e., DB W/R / r. Finally, we need to capture the color(s) of the petaloids. Those color(s) are preceded by a dash (-): DB W/R / r—w. It is a complicated process that we will get more used to using as we work through our BG seedlings! I’ve already kidded Lou about how we are supposed to treat an eye zone at the base of the ray florets. I know that we do have BG seedlings with colors at least that complicated. At some point we will no doubt conclude that the added complications of capturing the colors can’t be justified on the basis of better characterization of the seedling.

This variegated collarette, for example, has a yellow eye zone. The current color nomenclature doesn’t let you add an eye zone on a collarette. How important is it for us to be able to do it? There will certainly be discussion within the ADS Classification Committee on that topic in the future.



That seedling makes a great segue to the other topic I wanted to include in this column. While its color puts it right at the top of my seedling “keeper” list, it has some characteristics that are pretty troubling. Take another look here; what do you think about Form? That ray floret at noon is a big problem; isn’t it! I hope that it is not typical of the other blooms to come from that cultivar next year, but let’s pretend they all look pretty much like that one. Let’s also pretend that you have three blooms like that sitting on the Seedling Bench for numerical evaluation. Color is a strong attribute that would also contribute to Distinction for the entry but even the color has some substantial flaws. Check those streaks on the 7 o’clock and 2 o’clock ray florets. Nevertheless, I think you would agree that the color is passing, i.e., better than 85%.

Have fun getting your 2018 garden started. New stuff next month; I promise!

Ron