

## **The JUDGE's Corner**

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### **Happy New Year!**

The new season is beginning! :-) I have started to look at the websites for new dahlias and am looking at my list of seedling tubers for potential entries in the ADS Trial Gardens. I am enjoying increasingly summer-like weather. (Oops; that might just be a Florida thing; I tend to forget the difference!) In any case, it is great to be starting to think about the 2016 dahlia season.

A substantial number of DSO members should be sharing my vision of a Trial Garden winner in the 2016 season. Our first set of Blossom Gulch seedlings will be in their fourth year of existence and are therefore eligible for evaluation both on the seedling bench and in the Trial Gardens. There were some wonderful seedlings that grew from that first set of seeds! I certainly encourage you to send the best of them for Trial Garden evaluation. I always send cultivars to at least five gardens because you need to have at least 3 scores above 85 in order to be in the running for a Trial Garden Medal. Our open-centered BG entries compete for the Evie Gullikson Medal and you can be sure that there will be great competition for that Medal. Nevertheless, I am confident that one of our cultivars has a good chance to win!

If you have questions about how best to get your seedlings evaluated, please email me with those questions. Thanks again, Kathy Iler and Blossom Gulch Dahlias, for making it all possible!!

### **Virus Update**

DSO member and friend Jim Chuey continues to provide the support required to make progress on getting control over the virus that can invade our dahlia gardens. We are currently working on the details of a program that could make it possible for any of us - and any of our dahlia suppliers - to submit samples for virus analysis. Wouldn't it be great to be able to buy tubers from suppliers who are able to say that the plant from which your tuber came was free of virus!? I would be happy to pay an extra couple dollars for that assurance. We haven't completed those discussions, but it is clear that the program would be too costly even to consider if Jim weren't prepared to subsidize it! Thanks again, Jim!

If you have not yet looked at the virus article Sharon posted on the ADS Website in mid-February, I encourage you to check it out. Professor Papu tested samples from a number of DSO gardens for each of the six viruses that occur naturally in our gardens. The test results were very consistent with the brochure that was published with the June Bulletin. That is, leaves that looked bad, like those in the brochure, tested positive for virus and foliage that was clean in appearance tested negative for the virus. The label in the photo above illustrates the documentation that accompanied each sample. The foliage on that sample was clean and no virus was detected. The bottom line was that the “If in doubt, throw it out” strategy was basically validated.



*Samples of Thomas A. Edison gathered from plant number 23 in the eastern half of row 2 in the back garden location (b) of garden c (sample 10 from that garden).*

The implications of the sample testing project are substantial. Not only are most of our plants free of virus, but those with virus can be identified and eliminated based on the appearance of their foliage. Carl Chuey was convinced that the work of WSU could make an important contribution to the elimination of virus in our dahlia gardens and there is increasing evidence that he was correct!



Many thanks to Tony Evangelista for his active involvement and enthusiasm for this project; to Jerry Moreno and Randy Foith for their being a part of the project and their leadership in the DSO and Midwest; and, of course, to Jim Chuey for his support and contributions!

## Requirements to Become a Judge and to Be a Judge

A huge majority of DSO members have the basic requirement to be a dahlia judge. That is to be an enthusiastic dahlia grower! The next step may be the toughest; you need to become a dahlia exhibitor. Getting over that hurdle can be a challenge. You may need to invest a little more time and effort in maintaining your plants. You need to get them to the show and you need to stage them when you get there. The benefits of investing that effort, however, are tremendous. The esprit de corps that exists around those setup and show tables is one of the best parts of growing dahlias! Try it; you'll love it!

One key motivator in my enthusiasm for the Blossum Gulch seedlings was that it encouraged everybody to get those new cultivars to a dahlia show (photos, right). How could you keep that brand new and unique new cultivar hidden away? I know it worked for some of you; if you still have one of those new 'treasures' hidden away in your garden, you need to show it to the rest of us at a show this summer!

Once you are over that 'exhibit hurdle,' the ADS does appropriately prescribe a set of standards for experience and training of an official ADS judge. Those standards make it possible to expect similar results on similar entries of seedlings, for example, all across the ADS. Those specific requirements can be found both on the ADS and DSO websites. Please be sure to ask me if you have specific questions.

A number of us completed the Judges Examination in 2011 and will need to complete it again this year. (Two have already done that; thanks!) It is a straightforward set of questions covering the Guide to Judging Dahlias, the CHD, and the Seedling Evaluation Forms and it is



*Some of our Blossum Gulch seedlings*

also available on the ADS website. Now is the time for the class of '11 to invest some effort in the project before the season gets busier. Let me know if you have questions.

### **Classification Challenge**

It is possible, I suppose, that some of you have forgotten the Classification Challenge that was included in the November Digest. :-) The bloom is at the right and I said it was about 3.5" in diameter. It is probably clear that the ray florets are fully involute over virtually their entire length. That puts it in the Ball / Miniature Ball / Pom form group. The size of the cultivar is borderline. It is either a large Miniature Ball or a small Ball.



It is a little surprising that each of the scores on this cultivar, both on the bench and in the trial gardens, had it as a Miniature Ball. It was on the small side of 3.5" across the board.

The color is intriguing and is one of its most attractive attributes. The bases of the ray florets are a pink that nicely complements the ends of the ray florets that are purple. The question becomes whether or not to include that second color in the classification of the cultivar. The bottom line was a split decision. Two of the SBE and one of the TG results were DB. One of the SBE and three of the TG results were either PR or DR. The majority ruled MB PR24. A number of you probably purchased this one. It is Parshall's Clearview Royal and it was the highest scoring cultivar among the BA, MBA and P entries in the TGs.



The classification challenge for you this month is to classify the cultivar pictured at the left. The challenge is more for the color than for the form. What do you think? Do you remember Glenn Ruth's counsel on this issue?

### The Judging Challenge

Your assignment from November was to make a (short!) list of the form defects you can see in the two BG seedlings pictured on the right.

From the big picture perspective, each entry had excellent form, so don't be surprised if no faults leap out at you. The challenge involves the thought process more than the faults. My first step in the process, after being away from judging for four months, was to revisit page 40 of the Guide to Judging Dahlias to remind myself of the Form characteristics you need to consider on an open-centered cultivar. Another good approach would have been to get out the Score Sheet for open-centered cultivars to review what was important in considering Form. Your conclusion would have been that contour and depth don't matter here, right?! (Right.) Symmetry, Trueness to Form, and Development (maturity) do. Ok, now with the CHD or the Score Sheet in hand, go back and look at those two entries again.

The upper left bloom in the Single, (top right), appears to have ray florets that are more cupped than the others. If that were the case, it would be a subtle form fault both from the point of view of the conformation to the ideal definition of the Single form and the uniformity of the form over the three blooms in the entry. If there are differences in maturity among the three blooms, they are more subtle



than I can detect in the picture. Based on what we can see here; the Form is certainly well above passing (85%). A deduction of 2 or 3 points leaves us with a score of the order of 90% for Form.

Symmetry issues are more clear in the OT cultivar. Compare, for example, the gaps at 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock on the lower two blooms. The gaps are clearly different. Interesting, isn't it, that the gaps stand out more clearly in the OT form than they do in the S form. The conformance to the OT definition looks good, but the petaloids are sure tough to see in the picture. The uniformity of form among the blooms looks good. Here again, the Form on this entry is above 85%. A deduction of 3 or 4 points puts us above 85% and below 90%.

Your challenge for next month is to identify the Form faults you see in the bloom at the bottom of the previous page It is a Pom.

*Ron*

