

The JUDGE's Corner

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The Virus Project

There will be an article in the March ADS Bulletin regarding the results of last season's testing of dahlias for virus. Participation in the project exceeded our expectations. Samples from 722 dahlia plants were shipped to Professor Pappu from over 40 individual dahlia gardens across the US. From the 'big picture' point of view, the results supported the original premise that grew out of the results of the tests in our Northeast Ohio gardens in 2015: **If in doubt, throw it out!**

As you will find in the Bulletin article, however, the extent of virus and the scatter in the results was far larger than we had anticipated from the 2015 tests. About 1/4 of the samples tested in 2015 had virus; about 1/2 of the samples tested in 2016 had virus! Most tests on plants with clean foliage showed them to be free of virus. Most tests on "G1" plants showed them to be free of virus. There were, however, over 40% of plants with either clean foliage or from G1 tubers that did exhibit virus—a disappointing result. The plant pictured below exhibited fairly subtle chlorosis along the veins of the leaves and tested positive for Tobacco Streak Virus.

We are in the process of working out the best strategy for testing in the 2017 season. Jim Chuey, through the Scheetz-Chuey foundation is planning on supporting the testing program again this year. (Thanks, Jim!!)



Virus in a Dahlia Show

One key message for judging in our 2017 shows is that we need to continue to penalize entries that show signs of virus. It is inappropriate to reward plants and entries with virus.

There are two things to look for when you think an entry shows virus: chlorosis (yellowing) of the veins and a blotchy or mosaic pattern in the leaves. Those two characteristics differentiate virus from nutritional problems in dahlia leaves. Nutritional deficiencies cause a



much more uniform chlorosis across the leaves and often leave the veins dark green. The left pictured on the left exhibits general yellowing between the relatively dark green veins. This plant, from my garden, was almost certainly suffering from nitrogen deficiency. For a lot of good information on the effects of nutritional deficiencies on the appearance of leaves, please see an excellent Youtube video based on a NC State Master's Thesis at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPVb7XnUMX4&sns=em>.

If the leaves on your entry look like the one above, you should penalize the foliage as less than ideal but it should not be set back as having virus.

On the other hand, if your suspicious entry has mottled leaves



(subtle oak leaf pattern in the picture on the right) and/or yellowed veins (obvious in the picture on the left, it should be set back as having virus.

If you are in doubt about the presence of virus, please ask your

judging team leader or the judging chair about your concern. Please also remember that the DSO and MVDS judges may have more experience regarding the appearance of virus on our plants than those from other clubs. As usual, you will need to be respectful of the opinions and perspective of all the members of your judging team, particularly when you are judging in a show outside our immediate area.

Judging Status

I haven't heard anything from our AC judges or CN judges on how best to move up to the next level. I encourage you all to consider moving up. The requirements are probably most easily accessible on the ADS website. Many of you will find that the only item required is to complete the test for AC or SR judges. Let me know if you have questions. Now is the time to get on with it!

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Judging Videos

Another winter/spring judging activity you will find worthwhile is watching one or more of the judging videos that are available on the ADS website. I watched the series produced by the Burtons some time ago. They are very worthwhile; please watch them if you haven't already done so.

Sharon posted the new one by Art Chmura relatively recently and I watched it a few weeks ago. It lasts less than an hour and was recorded at a Meeting of the Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers last fall. I enjoyed it thoroughly, perhaps in part because Art approached the presentation very differently from what I ordinarily do. That means that you will hear something quite different from what you've heard from me in recent years. His comments are thoroughly based on the Guide to Judging Dahlias (GJD) and his focus is on "Situational Judging." (Please just ignore the fact that Art calls the GJD "Cook's Manual" in a lot of places in the video. He is just using old terminology, from when judging was based on the previous judging manual—Cook's.)

"Situational Judging" basically boils down to how a judge needs to understand and implement the GJD principles depending on whether he or she is judging at a show, on the bench, or in a Trial Garden and on how different conditions in each of those situations affect their approach. We have discussed those differences in our judging seminars on a number of occasions; but I encourage you to take a look at Art's video. I am confident you will learn a lot and enjoy the process. At about 27.5 minutes into the video, you will hear Art endorse one of my favorite themes. :-) If you have only one entry in a class and it has a bloom and a pair of leaves, give it a first!!

The next section of this month's column is based on Art's comments at about 24 minutes in the video. You will hear him lament how poorly undisseeded seedling classes are judged in some shows outside the Northwest. In my experience, the point counting procedure he describes for 'scoring' first and second year seedlings is only used in the Northwest. It is, nevertheless, a very useful tool to help new growers and originators determine how their seedlings are likely to perform out there in the real world. Maybe we need to consider adding that class to our DSO shows!

Judging Undisseminated Seedlings

You will find, on page 41 in the GJD, a section that discusses an approach for quantitatively judging undisseeded seedlings. The manual refers to the section in terms of first and second year seedlings but it was written before we required seedlings to be raised for four years before they could be formally evaluated on the bench or in a trial garden. I imagine

the section would now include third year seedlings.



The section is an important and popular one in the Northwest where it could be one of the largest in the show. The class that Barbara is studying in the picture above could be the open-centered portion of the seedling section in the 2012 Puget Sound Dahlia Association Show. I say that because there are blue ribbons on entries that look like they should be competing against one another. More on that below. Note that it is a very large class.

The objective for an exhibitor in this section is to learn the judges' opinion on the probability for a seedling to succeed in exhibition. (That, of course, is also why we tend to exhibit seedlings in open competition. The advantage of the separate class is that it specifically addresses the quality of the individual seedling.) The first step in the process of judging the class is for the team, as a group, to classify the entries just as they would for a TG or SBE evaluation. The second step is to look up the competition for the seedling in the Classification and Handbook of Dahlias (CHD). The third step is for each judge to assess how well the seedling will do in a show against that competition.

Based on that assessment, a score between 1 and 10 is assigned to the entry according to the table on p. 42 in the GJD. For examples, a score of 10 would indicate that the seedling should be the “Best in Show;” a score of 5 indicates that it should get a Blue Ribbon; and a 1 indicates that it should get no award. Each seedling that gets an average score among the three judges of 4.0 or greater gets a Blue Ribbon. (Thus, the potential exists for a number of ribbons on very similar entries that look like they might be competing with one another.)

The best analogy from our DSO judge’s training and experience might be in determining the value for Distinction in a formal evaluation of a fourth year (or later) seedling. We have discussed Distinction in previous judging seminars in terms of a combination of merits associated with either 1) a highly striking and appealing appearance and 2) the level of success one might expect of the seedling in show competition. The approach used to judge undisseminated seedlings in the Northwest takes that latter element of Distinction as the basis for judging the section.

Take a look at pages 41 and 42 in the GJD. Do we want to add it to our DSO Show Schedule? My thought at the moment is to wait to do that until we try it in a judging seminar. With some experience with the approach, we can then consider the merit of adding it to our schedule. However, if you are heading out to the West Coast for a show, make sure you read about the class in the GJD! You might end up judging that class! It helps the hybridizers in that area sort out the best and the worst of their seedlings. I know that would be a very useful function for me in trying to optimize the space in my seedling-packed garden!

November Quiz

In November, I asked you to classify the new cultivar on the right. The Form for the cultivar is easy, right? But what about the color? I had planned on spending some time this month discussing the differences among bicolors, blends, and eye zones. I got so enthused about Art’s video that I’ve run out of space this month. We will get back to colors next month. In the meantime, this cultivar is Miss Molly; it is a single dark blend. It scored 86.8 in the North Central Trial Garden. Charles Krueger is the originator.



Ron