

The JUDGE's Corner

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Controlling the Spread of Virus in Your Garden

If your garden is like most, there are some tubers or plants that you are getting ready to plant that have virus. That means that it is important that you invest some time and effort to avoid spreading the virus from the infected tubers and plants to the clean tubers and plants. Dr. Pappu's advice is to clean your tools with a 10% bleach solution between each plant. The bleach solution kills any virus present in the juices you might be moving with the tool from your last cut and prevents infecting the next cut.

The good news is that, if your garden is like the other DSO gardens that Dr. Pappu tested for virus in September of last year, most of your tubers are **not infected** with virus. That fact, in combination with a strategy of roguing out plants with foliage that exhibits yellowing of the veins and/or yellow spots on the leaves, will lead you to an increasing portion of healthy, virus free, dahlias in your garden.

Hopefully, a number of you will be able to acquire "G1" tubers at one or more of our Midwest auctions this spring. Those tubers came from plants that Dr. Pappu found to be free of virus. You can be confident that the first generation of tubers/plants ("G1") from those virus free plants are also free of virus. We in the DSO have been in the lead role in implementing this G1 strategy. Dr. Pappu has stated that the best way to reduce virus in our gardens is to grow plants from tubers that are known to be free of virus.

All of the foregoing work has been made possible by the generous support of Jim Chuey and the Scheetz-Chuey Foundation. Jim has recently made another donation to WSU that will establish a testing service at WSU where anyone will be able to have their plants tested for virus. His donation makes it possible for the cost of the testing to be \$10 per plant! A minimum set of 30 samples is required; but the samples can come from more than one garden—so that a 'club project' makes a lot of sense. That should also provide the opportunity for a lot of tests and a lot of "G1" tubers for the spring of 2017!

I want to again acknowledge Carl Chuey's wisdom and knowledge of virus in dahlias and Jim Chuey's ongoing support. They have made it possible to make great progress in the control of virus!



April's Challenge Bloom

April Challenge

Last month I combined the Classification and Judging Challenges into a single bloom, shown at the top of the next page. No doubt, as you thought about the classification, you recognized why I combined the two issues. The classification of this new cultivar was a bit of a challenge. The question becomes, as always, which form definition “mountain” the cultivar best

matches. Each form definition is considered to be an “ideal” definition. It is simply an artificial way for us humans to group cultivars into similar appearing groups so that we can describe and judge them.

The mountain analogy is a useful one in that it makes it clear that individual blooms or cultivars can exist at a whole lot of elevations up that mountain and that most of them will not be at the peak of the mountain. We describe the elevation of the cultivar on that mountain when we give it a score for its Conformance to the Ideal. What is the numerical value for that characteristic on a fully double bloom? I hope you remember that that particular attribute has a total value of five points(!). It is, in my experience, one of the attributes that is most commonly over-rated. Keep in mind when you are judging in a show, in particular, that the total height of the mountain is only five points. Of course, five points can make a big difference in an entry’s success; but conformance to the ideal form needs to be considered in the context of all of the other attributes of the entry.

What is your next step in classifying this entry? Yes, of course, you need to get out your Classification and Handbook of Dahlias (CHD) and look at the 2016 definitions, including the Laciniated (LC) definition, in particular. (Q: Why do you need to look at the CHD and not the Guide to Judging Dahlias (GJD)? A: Because the definitions in the CHD are the current, updated definitions and those in the GJD are not only out of date but also do not include the newest forms.) It is clear that the tips of the ray florets in the April challenge bloom are split. Two of the key characteristics in the LC definition are split tips and achieving a fringed effect.



Mt. View Neeser B



April's Challenge Bloom

Do you remember Mt. View Neeser B from last month's column? The splits are deeper on it than this April Challenge Bloom. While I ordinarily think that the deeper splits are important in achieving the "fringed appearance," it seems that the April bloom exhibits as much of that fringed appearance as the Mt. View Neeser B.

Are there other forms we should consider? Did you notice the concern in the LC definition: "Ray florets with a shallow notch ... and possessing little twisting to the extreme portion should not be classified as laciniated." (2016 CHD, p. 4) If we think of the splits as a temporary condition associated with hot weather, for example, we might envision twisted and wavy ray florets and check out the Informal Decorative definition. Except for the split tip pits and the fringed appearance, the definition could fit reasonably well. The bottom line of the classification of the challenge bloom

is, nevertheless, that the tips of the ray florets are twisted and it lies closest to the Laciniated mountain.

What do you think about the color? Like last month's challenge bloom, it is clear that you can see two colors "at arm's length." The base of the florets are white and the tips are dark pink (DP). The Trial Gardens were divided between DP17 and PR (purple)25 for the tips and had WH2 and WH3 for the base of the florets. Look at the CHD again to determine whether the cultivar is a light (LB) or a dark blend (DB). All the purples are in the DB group; the DP are split between DB and LB, but DP17 is in the DB group. The bottom line for the classification of this cultivar, Glencoe Fluff, became B LC DB DP17/WH3.

The other assignment from last month was to identify any obvious faults in the bloom. We've already discussed one of those faults; that is that the form of the bloom is not at the peak of Laciniated moun

ain. Do you see other form faults? As usual, it is impossible to realistically evaluate a bloom from a picture. If we were trying to generate a numerical value for a triple entry of this cultivar, the question to raise at this point might be whether or not the Form should be considered to be a passing or a failing score. My sense would be that the entry should achieve a passing score for Form.

One of the positive Form attributes of the challenge cultivar is its contour. Compare, again, the forms of the two Laciniated cultivars we've been discussing. Contour is one of the five basic Form

issues to be evaluated on a fully double cultivar. I do not usually find it to be an attribute that is easy to describe or evaluate. However, the comparison of these two blooms effectively illustrates a difference in contour. I have heard an extreme case of the contour of the bloom on the right described as an 'ice cream cone' effect. The center of the bloom looks like the bottom of an ice cream sugar cone with the ray florets toward the equator falling rapidly away from that cone in the center.



In contrast, the ray florets on this month's challenge bloom spiral gradually away from the center and fill the bloom uniformly from the center out to the equator. The contrast is, I think, a nice example of a difference in the Contour element of Form. The total value of Contour, like Conformance to the Ideal definition, is, again, five points.

Did you see other Form faults? There appear to be a small gaps at around 10 o'clock and 4 o'clock. The picture also suggests to me that the ray florets below the center could be longer than those above the bloom, a symmetry problem commonly called bearding.

We can also get a sense of Color and Substance faults from the picture. The sun striking the bloom from the upper right is probably the reason the white is more apparent in that quadrant, but it would be worth looking at the bloom more closely to make sure that is the reason for the appearance. You would also want to check the uniformity of the color at the center of the bloom. The dark pink seems to extend out toward 9 o'clock more than other directions around the center of the bloom. That would be a more substantial color fault if that is the case.

Another potential source of the appearance of bearding is that the ray florets below the center of the bloom may be drooping as a result of losing Substance. It is instructive to again compare our challenge bloom to Mt. View Neeser B. The ray florets in the picture above appear to be thoroughly turgid all the way around the bloom, while those on the April Challenge bloom seem a little droopy at the bottom.

The April challenge bloom is another new 2016 introduction called Glencoe Fluff. It scored well in both of the Trial Gardens where it was entered, averaging 87.3, and is classified as B LC DB DP17/WH3.

Judging Challenge

For next month, take another look at the elements of Form summarized for fully double blooms on page 17 and 18 in the GJD and quantified on page 40 of the GJD. Which of those Form elements are relevant to open-centered cultivars? How would you divide up the 28 Form points for those open-centered entries??

Classification Challenge

The bloom on the right is an easy one to classify for Form but what are you going to do for color? Remember that determining the color on open-centered cultivars can be a little more complicated than it is for the fully double cultivars.

Do you see any obvious Form or Color faults?



Judging Requirements, Tests

An important role of our American Dahlia Society is making sure that judges in northern Alberta or the DSO, for examples, are judging dahlias in the same way that other judges all across North America are judging them. A few years ago, I was involved in resolving a problem in that regard. At the time, it became clear that seedling scores varied significantly from one region to other regions. We implemented a number of changes in the judging requirements at that time, including, in particular, increasing the requirements for our judges to judge seedlings on the bench and in the Trial Gardens. That hands-on experience is the critical part of qualifying to be a judge, at least as I see it. Nevertheless, the application of judging knowledge fundamentally depends on a good knowledge of the material in the judging manual, the handbook, and the score sheets.

The written tests are therefore also important. Many of us completed the judging tests most recently in 2011. The national rules require us to complete the tests every 5 years. I will be working on my test soon; now is a good time to get started on yours, too. I already have a couple in hand (thanks Randy, Kathy)!

If you are a candidate judge and are ready to start on the Accredited test, let me know and I will help you get started!

Thanks for your cooperation.

Ron

JUDGING INFORMATION

See our DSO website for:

- Judging Status Maintenance Requirements
- Candidates Judging Requirements to become an Accredited Judge
- Accredited Judging Requirements to become a Senior Judge

See the ADS website to obtain the tests to complete:

<http://www.dahlia.org/index.php?page=judging-info>

