

## The JUDGE's Corner

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### Informal Decorative or Formal Decorative?

When you are a member of a team judging a seedling, there is a critical step in the process that you need to accomplish at the outset. You need to classify the seedling, both for Form and for Color. After you have completed the process of determining the Form of a seedling, you will have a great start on determining its score on Trueness to Form! If it was obviously an ID and everyone on the team agreed, your score will no doubt be on the high side of that range to five. On the other hand, if the two other judges thought it was an ID and you thought it probably best matched the SC definition, it is more likely to deserve a penalty of a couple points. (Remember that a two point penalty corresponds to 60% - a pretty stiff penalty.)

It is important that you recognize that an entry doesn't need to conform exactly to the definitions in the CHD in order to be put into a specific class. Your objective in the classification process is to determine which ideal definition the new cultivar most closely conforms.

This issue was recently the basis for strong differences in opinion between Trial Garden Directors. You may recognize the cultivar on the right as JS Jenny. The Trial Garden results came to me as pretty straightforward. There were four Trial Gardens that classified it as ID and one that had it as FD. The originator put it in as ID. As usual, I went with the majority opinion and sent it in to Lou as ID—probably without ever having looked at the picture. The upper picture came from the “FD Trial Garden;” the lower picture, from one of the “ID Trial gardens.” Obviously, they were the same cultivar.

What would you have said to the “FD Trial Garden Director” when he said to you something along the line: “How the heck did you get ID out of that entry?!?” (The answer was “majority opinion.”) When I looked at the cultivar, however, I had to say that he had an excellent point. Where are the “twisted, curled, or wavy” ray florets most appropriate for an ID bloom? In fact, the ray florets are “generally flat, broad, and smooth,”



i.e., just what the Classification and Handbook of Dahlias, (CHD) p. 3) calls out for the FD Form.

We speculated on the possible reasons for the ID classification. You may have an idea, too. Does JS Jenny look familiar? Does it remind you of another A-sized dahlia? The picture at right is Spartacus. Do you know its classification? A ID DR How about Vassio Meggos, its lavender cousin, below. The shapes and the arrangement of the florets on both familiar cultivars are somewhat similar to those of JS Jenny. (I think JS Jenny may be related to the group of cultivars that has evolved from Spartacus.)

Please do not be tempted to fall into the trap of classifying a new cultivar on the basis of its similarity to another cultivar, even if you know its parent classification! You need to go back to the CHD, review the ideal definitions, and figure out which “Form mountain” the new cultivar is closest to.

It is clear, I think, that none of the cultivars shown here are at the peak of any Form mountain. I think you would agree that Baron Katie, right, is nearer the peak of the ID Form Mountain than any of the foregoing cultivars. It has ray florets that really are twisted, curled, and wavy.

The bottom line is that the minority TG opinion might well be the correct opinion on the classification of JS Jenny. I imagine it will be up for re-classification soon. Spartacus has enough twisted and curly petals that it is probably best left as ID (albeit not at the top of the mountain!) The case for Vassio Meggos is less clear. It may well be closer to the FD peak than the ID peak.

The key lesson here is that you need to review the definitions when you are classifying a new cultivar and then determine on which mountain it best lies. That process will preclude ‘creep’ away from the FD class just because an entry is not perfectly uniform. Sports do not necessarily have the same form as their parent!



## Color

Let's just stay on the classification topic for a minute. The determination of the color of a new cultivar is pretty easy a large majority of the time.

Most cultivars are “self-colored,” i.e., just one color and basically all you need to do is to get out the ADS color charts and see which chip most closely matches the entry.

The cultivar on the right is Allen's High Voltage. It scored in 7 Trial Gardens last year and was classified as B ID PR in every one. (Where does it lie on the ID Form mountain? I would put it a little “uphill” from Spartacus, but “downhill” from Baron Katie. Do you agree?)

There was disagreement among the Trial Gardens on which color chip best matched the entry. There were three PR26, two PR29, one PR14, and one PR27. That led to a final classification of PR26.

Blends are at least one step more complicated to classify than dahlias with a single color. “Blends must contain more than one color ... separate and distinguishable at arm's length.” (Guide to Judging Dahlias (GJD), p. 12) Each of the colors must be from different color classes; i.e. two distinctly different yellows on a new cultivar doesn't make it a blend. It is yellow.

Once you determine that you can clearly see two colors at arm's length, you then determine the color chips that best match each of those colors. In a Trial Garden, you may be able to find a loose floret on a spent bloom to use for the color chart. On the seedling bench, however, you are stuck doing the best you can to identify that second color. Clearview Pastelle, right, won the Hart Medal as the highest scoring B dahlia in the Trial Gardens. Getting the color at the base of the florets was even tough in the Trial Gardens. It

was reported as pink, white, and yellow (yellow won). With the two colors in hand, you then determine which color is dominant. In this case, it is pretty easy to see that the pink is dominant over the yellow. In other cases, that call may be more difficult. Let's assume that you got PK23 and YL18, like the Trial Gardens. The next step is to go to your CHD and look at the paragraphs on blend colors on page 7. Find the blend that contains your PK23 color chip. Since it is in the “Light



Blend” list, you conclude that it is a light blend. Pink is easy inasmuch as all blends with any pink as the dominant color is a light blend. Note that most of the other colors are more complicated than that. For example, OR16 and OR17 are light blends while OR15 and OR18 are dark blends (unless the oranges merge with yellow, when it could become a flame blend!). Those assignments will generally be easy to sort out; but it should be clear that you must refer to the CHD and follow the instructions on page 7.

The formal color classification then consists of the dominant color, followed by the secondary color(s), separated by a forward slash. For Clearview Pastelle, the color classification is PK23/YL18.

The basis for assigning the chip numbers to the various colors was the old Royal Horticultural Society numbers we used before completing the ADS Color Guide. The assignments were actually worked out and finalized on the Miner’s back porch during an ADS Spring Meeting (more than!) a few years ago.

Go back a couple pages and take another look at Baron Katie. The color chips listed in the CHD are YL12/OR23. (The picture included there looks more like OR23/YL12, doesn’t it.) Check the blend identifications on page 7 again. The combination of YL12 and OR23 or OR23 and YL12 are Flame Blend.

When is a combination of two colors on an entry, visible from arm’s length, not a blend?? (Long pause here while you think about your answer.) It’s not a blend when it is a blush! Blushes are classified as a solid colored dahlia. How do you tell the difference between the two? Sometimes it is not easy. For example, in a seedling bench evaluation of the bloom on the right, you might well be tempted to say that the lavender at the center can be seen at the



ends of the ray florets and it should be blend. If you had a broader perspective on the cultivar, as in a Trial Garden situation, for example, you would know that the lavender can be a fleeting presence, particularly early in the season. As you may know, the cultivar pictured is Baron Dalton and it is appropriately classified as a solid white, BB FD WH1.

Separating a blush from a blend can be tough. Blushes are subtle and tend to vary from location to location and from time to time within the season.

It’s great to be back; I’m looking forward to seeing you all this season!

*Ron*