

The JUDGE's Corner

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Putting Those Tubers Away

I am always a little shocked about how quickly the season is over! It seems like it is only just in full swing when it's time to start cutting down the plants. (I think it may have a little something to do with the number of years I've been doing it.) In any case, we are now back in the mode of putting the gardens to bed instead of waking them up like we did a few months (weeks?) ago.

I encourage you to follow Dr. Pappu's advice as you work in the garden digging plants and on your bench dividing tubers. His counsel is not to dig those plants with foliage exhibiting virus symptoms. Just leave them in the ground—or better yet, wait until you are done digging, then dig the plants with virus and throw them in an isolated pile separate from your compost pile. His other critical



Plants with yellowed veins like this should not be saved

piece of advice is to clean your cutting tools between each clump (10% solution of bleach works well). As many of you know, that is a strategy that I did not rigorously follow in previous years and I now regret it! I pulled out a lot of my stock this past season.

The ADS website (managed with great skill by our own Sharon Swaney) reproduces an article first published in the Quarterly Bulletin of the Michigan Dahlia Association that describes the “Saran Wrap” procedure for storing tubers. That is basically the approach I have adopted and I have excellent success with it. I lose almost no tubers to rot. Try a few stored that way; you might like it. One key, I believe, is to keep the temperature of the tubers as cool and as uniform as you can manage over the winter. Of course the tubers should not be allowed to freeze; a temperature of about 45 degrees works well for me.

The bottom line for storing tubers is that there are lots of alternative approaches; use the one that works well for you!

The Petitti Show and Judging Seminar

The weather for the Petitti Show was great for the flowers but was certainly a challenge for the exhibitors! A high in the 50's combined with wind and rain kept us moving and rubbing our hands all day!

Other than the winter coats, hats, and, yes, even gloves, the show was pretty much as usual. Lots of nice blooms, lots of special friends, and a little commiserating about the lousy day! With enough judges to get four teams and with excellent cooperation among the teams, we zipped through the judging at a great pace. "Thank you" to all the judges who joined the process.

Our friends from MVDS, Jim Chuey and Harriet Chandler brought a lot of wonderful blooms and did a well deserved job of dominating the head table. Their entry of Cleaview Lily was a great Grand Champion. Great form, great color, great substance, ... in short, tough to beat!

Sharon's "Homecoming" in the Artistic Design section, pictured lower right, won that section. I also enjoyed Dave Cap's happy pumpkin entry, pictured on the left.



As usual, Dave managed the process of setting up and taking down the show. Thanks, again, Dave for all you do that lets us have a dahlia show!!



Oh and thanks for the wonderful cake we had for dessert after judging and lunch. For some strange reason, the rumor that Barbara is retiring as a judge has been spreading. I thought I had better quash that impression quickly. We all know that we couldn't get along without her in that role, right?! It was a great cake, though!

The Petitti Judging Seminar

The weather precluded investing any time on judging topics other than the main one, that being a preview of next year's "coming of age" of our first generation of Blossom Gulch seedlings from 2013. In the summer of



Judges observing during the seminar. Jack Wharton, right, is our newest (and youngest) judge.

2016, those seedlings will be fourth year seedlings and will become eligible for submission to the Trial Gardens and to be entered in the Seedling Bench (SBE) evaluation at our shows. There were 8 nice seedlings entered for the dress rehearsal. We divided into four teams and walked through the process of formally and quantitatively scoring each of the seedlings as a team.

This process can take different forms in different shows, depending on the views of the Show and Judging Chairpersons. At one extreme, each of the three judges assigned to evaluate an entry works entirely independently from the others. The individual scores may not even be compared or discussed. My preference and the one most generally used across the country is to cooperate in the determination of the classification, i.e., form and the color, of the entry; then to discuss the faults observed by each team member. Usually that process is repeated for each of the eight attributes contributing to the score. After the discussion of faults and their severity, each judge generates his own personal assessment of the severity of the fault and assigns a numerical value to each attribute in turn. The scores are then added up and the bottom lines compared among the three judges. If the scores end up within 2 or 3 points of each other, the process can be complete. If the differences are bigger than 2 or 3 points or if the judges prefer, the results on individual attributes can be compared in order to best understand the reasons for the differences in results. If a judge concludes that he or she was too generous or too harsh in their evaluation, the value for the relevant attribute can be adjusted, presumably but not necessarily to achieve a more consistent set of scores. In a formal SBE evaluation, the three scores are averaged and the final result reported on the entry tag. If the score achieved is above 85, the result is also reported to the ADS; the new cultivar is named and becomes a permanent part of the ADS list of dahlia cultivars.



The two highest scoring entries in the seminar are pictured on the right. We did not go through the process of formally averaging the various scores among the participants in the seminar, but each of these two entries scored very high, of the order of 90.



Before you read further, please take a few seconds to classify each of the two entries.

The Form for the cultivar in the top picture is pretty straightforward but what about its color? Classifying it as a S LB is an option; you can certainly see two colors there. That striking color combination may be the cultivar's greatest strength. I think, however, that the best classification is to call the color LV (not sure about that, could also be P or PK!) with a white eye zone. That final conclusion will need to wait until it is in the TGs and on SBE evaluation next year; but I would anticipate S LV/w.

If you managed to notice the petaloids on the cultivar at the bottom, you should have called it an orchette, OT. The color is a little tricky on this one, too, inasmuch as there is some subtle red on the reverse of the ray florets. If you conclude that color is a blend of white with red, it becomes OT DB W/RD/w-w since both the face of the ray florets and the petaloids are white. My expectation on this one, however, is that the red on the reverse will be considered a blush and the classification will be W/w-w.

The seedling at the top won the award as the best seedling in the judging seminar and went to the head table. I'm not going to further identify the entries because you will certainly be seeing them on the SBE next year. It is pretty much unavoidable that some judges will know the origination of a cultivar. If you find yourself in the situation where you are called on to do an SBE or TG evaluation of an entry that you recognize, keep in mind the fact that the best strategy is to do your evaluation with complete objectivity. You are not doing the originator a favor by evaluating the entry any other way. It is in their best interests for the cultivar to simply get the score it deserves!

Classification Challenge

Your assignment for this month was to classify the bloom on the next page, upper left. I told you it is about 5" in diameter; that makes it a BB. The ray florets are fully revolute over most of their length; that makes it a cactus. However, is it a C or an IC? The conclusion was that it was not sufficiently incurved to be an IC. The color is a bright orange



and the cultivar is Hollyhill Jeanette,
BB C OR.

Your Challenge for next time is to
classify the bloom on the right. It is about
3.5” in diameter.



Judging Challenge

Did you find the reference in the Guide to Judging Dahlias (GJD) regarding what portion of Form’s 28 points should be based on Depth? That was last month’s challenge and it is a tough one. Page 40 in the GJD tells you that the answer is 8 points.

One of the benefits of doing the judging tests is that you are pretty much forced to read through the GJD in some detail to find the answers. We will be starting that testing process again in 2016; a number of us completed the requirements last in 2011 and the requirements need to be fulfilled every five years.

For next month, please make a (short!) list of the form faults you see in the two triples on a previous page. I plan to walk through the SBE process on several of those seedling entries at Petitti’s for my next column. The two shown on the previous page exhibit relatively few, subtle form defects.

Ron

