The JUDGE's Corner
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Become an ADS/DSO Judge

Many of you will recognize the bloom on the right as the spectacular AC Casper that was the Grand Champion at the National Show in Chicago in September. Jim Chuey and Harriet Chandler were the DSO members who grew, hauled, and exhibited that wonderful bloom in Chicago. The question that this column tries to address each month is 'What are the characteristics of a dahlia bloom that make it a potential Grand Champion at a National Show - or at the local county fair?' Those characteristics are treated in detail in the ADS publication, *Guide to Judging Dahlias (GJD)*. Supplemental and update information are presented in the annual publication of the ADS, *The Classification and Handbook of Dahlias (CHD)*. Finally, brief "reminders" of important judging criteria are found on the Seedling Score Sheets used to judge dahlias in Trial Gardens and in the Seedling Bench Evaluation process. Hopefully, the comments in these monthly columns provide useful reinforcement of the contents of each of the foregoing sources of judging information.

Glenn Ruth was the DSO's Judging Chairman for many years. He greatly influenced the thinking and the experience of most of the DSO's current Senior (SR) and Accredited (AC) judges. (The picture of Glenn, at right with Jerry Moreno, is one of my favorites.) Glenn's key messages to DSO judges were 1) remember that this is just a hobby, 2) have fun in the judging process, and 3) learn something from your colleagues on the judging team. We continue to try to incorporate his wise counsel in current DSO judging!

Perhaps the best news in all of the discussion here is that it can lead you to greater enjoyment of our dahlias and all the activities that surround

them. Even if your only plan for using the blooms in your garden is to put them on the dining room table, understanding the criteria that make a beautiful flower into a Grand Champion will help you to better appreciate that bouquet on your table.

I encourage all of you to join our team of DSO judges. Send me an email if you need help on the first, or the next, steps in that process. I also encourage our team of judges to spend a few evenings this winter with the judging manual!

Classification of Seedlings

A key step in the process of evaluating a seedling is determining its classification. Classification provides the basis for the new cultivar to be gathered into appropriate groups for competition. A useful analogy is a "form mountain." The CHD provides the current ideal definition for the pinnacle of that mountain. It is, perhaps, unfortunate that we need to separate those natural creations into groups they may not exactly fit. The "elevation" of the seedling on that mountain, however, is only a small (5%) portion of its total evaluation.

One of the benefits of being involved in the management of the ADS Trial Gardens (TGs) is that I get an early look at the new cultivars and their classification. Roger Walker has the responsibility for pulling together all the Seedling Bench Evaluation (SBE) results. He and I work together to reconcile the two sets of data. The decision is very easy for most of the new cultivars. Clearview Peachy is an example of such a cultivar. It scored a total of 6 times between the SBE and the TGs. It was classified as a ball 5 out of those 6

Clearview Peachy, BA PK10

times. In the sixth case it was FD; but the choice for BA was clearly the majority pick. As you might anticipate, the finalization of the color of the cultivar was tougher. Most of the results favored a solid color over a blend and there were several pinks. The bottom line was PK10. Clearview Peachy also scored well enough in the TGs to win the Lynn Dudley Medal as the highest scoring BA, MB, and P.

For seedlings that lie well away from the peak of those form "mountains," the final choice can be more difficult and sometimes more

controversial. The cultivar pictured here on the right fell in that category. How would you classify Clearview Palser? It is even more important than usual that you get out your CHD and look at the current ideal definitions before you make that call. The choice is between ID and FD and the shape and the arrangement of the ray florets determine the choice; do you agree? The FD definition describes the ray florets as "generally flat, broad, and smooth in a regular arrangement that gradually recurve toward the stem." The ID definition describes the ray florets as "twisted, curled, or wavy and of uniform size and irregular arrangement."

Clearview Palser

You might even want to bring to memory (or get out your smart phone and look at!) some examples of ID and FD cultivars. The cultivars on the right were also in the Trial Gardens this year. Skipley Smiles won the Dudley Medal for the miniature dahlias and meets the FD definition pretty well. The ray florets on Allen's High Voltage meet the definition for ID florets pretty well, too. Before you leap to the conclusion that Clearview Palser should be FD, check the picture on the lower left, below. That picture of Goldilocks will remind you that "wavy" ray florets can also lead to classification of ID.

Skipley Smiles, M FD DR, 2017 Dudley Medal Winner

The picture of Clearview Palser, above right, sure looks FD to me. Perhaps this is a good example of why you can't judge a bloom on the basis of one tiny picture. Clearview Palser, was classified once as FD and twice as ID between the TGs and SBE and is, therefore, an ID, at least for the time being. It may be one of the cultivars that Tony and the rest of the Classification Committee will soon need to

Allen's High Voltage, B ID PR

re-evaluate! (Thanks, Tony for ageing to join that committee!) My personal view on the classification as ID reflects the extent to which our thinking about the FD form has been influenced by the myriad of FDs that lie along the "ridge" between the FD "mountain" and the BA "mountain." Hollyhill Golden Boy, here on the right, is an example of a cultivar on that "ridge." The lesson there is that it is important to continue to refer to the current ideal definitions in the CHD in order not to drift too far off course in our classification process.

*Hollyhill Golden Boy,
M FD YL*

Petitti Show and Seminar

I certainly enjoyed the Petitti Show and Judging Seminar again this year. We had a nice turnout of exhibitors and blooms for the show and a great group of folks stayed for lunch (thanks again, ladies) and the seminar. Thanks to you all for participating!

Jim and Harriet brought a humongous Bryn Terfel that readily captured

the Grand Champion spot and there was a nice mix of recipients for the other awards. Congratulations to all.

One emphasis in the discussion before the hands-on portion of the seminar was on achieving "reasonable" results in the evaluation of seedlings on the bench. There is no substitute for experience in achieving that result. That, at least in part, is the reason that Candidate Judges spend several years observing and participating in judging teams at shows. One of the key starting points in evaluating a seedling is in the determination of whether or not a given attribute deserves a "passing" score. That experience of judging a show with a team of experienced judges will help put practical perspective on what characteristics constitute a passing score for each of the various attributes evaluated. That perspective will also provide a basis for adjusting up and down from that passing level of 85%.

There was some lively and informative discussion about some of the attributes of the hands-on examples at the seminar! :-)

Ron