

The JUDGE's Corner

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The National Show

Judging the Best in Show

I can't resist the temptation to start out on a bit of a personal note. Buddy Dean entered a very nice Baron Aunt Dorothy in the National Show in Asheville, NC, last month. In the Southern States shows, all the best in class entries compete for the honor of Best in Show. Buddy's Baron Aunt Dorothy won that title! It was a controversial decision; open-centered cultivars do not often beat out their fully double competition. It made me think that our DSO system of recognizing the best entry in each of the various classes - but avoiding direct competition between the open-centered and fully double cultivars - is a pretty good approach.

What would you do if you were among the judges picking the Best in Show (BIS) among a set of nearly perfect open-centered and fully double candidates. (That is probably what Barbara and Sharon are doing in the picture at the right.) Let's assume that you've discussed the quality of the entries with the team of judges working on BIS. My counsel to you would be to think about your choice in the context of the ADS Seedling Score Sheet. You don't need

to try to come up with a score for each entry; you need to think about the size of the deduction you would make for the faults you've seen in the various entries. That is possible because you can assume here that each of the blooms was nearly perfect and you can therefore just consider deductions for the faults you and the team have identified.

Let's just consider the Baron Aunt Dorothy entry. Look at the close-up of the bloom in the picture on the left. What faults do you see in the picture? It is a good bloom, isn't it; but remember, we are now looking for the smallest of faults in order to distinguish among the best





close-up of the bloom in the picture on the left. What faults do you see? It is a good bloom, isn't it; but remember, we are now looking for the smallest of faults in order to distinguish among the best of entries! At the time this picture was taken (not necessarily at the time the entry was judged!), there are some pretty clear Form faults, or Symmetry faults, associated with the distribution

of the ray florets around the bloom. The gaps at 4 and 8 o'clock are different from those at 3 and 9 o'clock, for example. Another Symmetry issue is that the ray floret at 3 o'clock is fluted; the others are not. (See page 61 of the Guide to Judging Dahlias (GJD). "Fluted: A fault if not uniform.")

How important is Symmetry in an open-centered cultivar? I hope each of you is saying to yourself "Very!!" As I've said in previous columns, those 28 Form points get divided only over Symmetry, Trueness-to-Type, and Maturity when you are dealing with an open-centered entry; right? Contour and Size Proportion drop out! (p. 40, GJD) Ok, a couple somewhat subtle Symmetry faults in that Baron Aunt Dorothy entry weigh pretty heavily in your thinking on the best choice. You want to translate those faults to a numerical value so that you can compare that value to the value of the faults in the other candidates. The GJD does not tell you the value of Symmetry in an open-centered cultivar. Let's see what happens if we assume that we value Maturity and Trueness to Type as 6 points each and value Symmetry at 16 points. I would rate the Symmetry as just barely passing here so that it would get 85% of those 16 points, translating to a penalty of about 2.5 points. Now you need to look at the other attributes and add up those penalties. Perhaps you find another 1.5 points among them. Now you need to do the same thing for each of the others in contention. It may be easier to do that now that you have a 4 point penalty in mind for the Baron Aunt Dorothy.

The question then is: Are there 4 points of penalties clearly present in any of them? If not, you tell your colleagues, again, that you are concerned about the Form issues on B Aunt D. You might also say to the team that the Wyn's Neon Dream (Randy's wonderful bloom that was King of the Show) would be your choice for the Best in Show honors.

It turns out, however, that the team determines that the Baron Aunt Dorothy entry is the BIS. What do you do now?? (I know that you know the answer to that one!) You own the majority decision of the team even if you disagree with it. When someone asks you how the heck that 'weed' beat out the "King of the Show," you say something to the effect that we sure liked that one, too, but concluded, as a team, that the Baron Aunt Dorothy should get the nod.

Judging at the National

As usual at a National Show, there were a lot of judging teams (25!) at Asheville. I had the pleasure of judging with a Southern States judge who was familiar with the local judging procedures and a National Capital DS member whom I had not met before. We followed Glenn Ruth's advice to enjoy the process and learn something from each other. One of the basic benefits of going to a National Show is the opportunity to judge with and learn from judges with totally different experience from yours. Judging with a new team is almost certain to provide many opportunities to build your knowledge.

Ohio Participants Did Well

Our Ohio dahlia growers did very well at the show, capturing a lot of the head table spots. Sharon has already posted some of the show results on the ADS website (dahlia.org) and a more complete list will be available there soon after they get the information to her.

One of the highlights of the weekend was an excellent presentation by our own Tony Evangelista. He made a great case for the advantages of an organic approach to our dahlia gardens. His message was very well received by a large group of ADS members and guests from around the world.

Classification Meeting

I always enjoy Lou Paradise's Classification Committee meeting. Two items stood out for me. First, Lou continues to encourage all of us to have "micro" (less than 2" in diameter) classes in our shows. He includes one class for fully double and one class for open-centered cultivars (except S/MS) in the Bay area shows. The classes are not particularly full; but he wants to be sure that the tiny blooms are saved and have a place to be exhibited.

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Second, the committee discussed how best to handle picotee coloring. I hope at least a couple of you are saying “what” coloring???

I did! The bloom at the right, above, shows one of the seedlings I took to the show. The white along the edge of the ray florets is “picotee” coloring. I had picotee



(and liked it!) - but didn't know what to call it! The question before the committee was what, if anything, should be done to recognize or characterize picotee in dahlias. There was no particular support for adding another color class; but it is possible that the committee will come up with some way to add the picotee feature to the color description of a cultivar with it. Picotee is, after all, an important part of the appearance of the bloom, at least as obvious as most eye zones, for example. The key point from the judging perspective is that it is not a fault. It does add another element requiring uniformity. Just like in a blend, the picotee should be uniform around the bloom. The ray floret at 7 o'clock in the seedling seems to fall a little short of that expectation.

Annual Meeting Virus Update

My update on the state of the virus project at the end of the Annual meeting inspired the most spirited discussion of the morning. I reported that the recent results of virus analysis in my garden were more complicated than those from 2015. While I had none of the Dahlia Mosaic Virus or Dahlia Common Mosaic Virus that I had last year, nearly 80% of my plants tested positive for Tomato Streak Virus (TSV). Perhaps the most disappointing observation was that TSV was detected in some of the plants grown from “G1” tubers. The G1 tubers were taken from plants that had no virus detected in 2015.

Professor Pappu had no simple explanation for that result. He did conclude, nevertheless, that the best strategy for us to pursue is still to test as many plants as possible this year. My key message to the group was,

therefore, to encourage each society to take advantage of the opportunity to test plants this year. The cost of testing in 2016 is artificially low as a result of a large donation by our friend and colleague, Jim Chuey, on behalf of the Scheetz-Chuey Foundation. I hope that it will be possible to reach another arrangement for testing next year, but that is not yet in place and will depend, to some extent, on the nature of the results achieved this year.

Minimizing Virus in your Garden

There are a number of things that you can do this Fall to help minimize the presence of virus in your garden next year. First, pull out any plants that are exhibiting yellowing along the veins of the leaves.

At right is a picture of a plant I pulled out today. I think (hope!) I've now removed all the plants I need to pull. It is a little less painful to do so now at the end of the season. Second, disinfect your cutting tools after you use them on one plant. Do not move on to another plant without doing so. If the first plant has virus and you don't disinfect the tool, you will almost certainly infect the second plant when you inflict the massive wound caused by cutting off a dead-head, for example. Remember that an insect can transfer the virus with a tiny bite. Third, when you are digging your plants, keep your shovel well away from the tubers.



Finally, when you are dividing the tubers, trim the end of the tubers and disinfect your tools again between each clump. Your garden will benefit from making those practices your standard practices!

October Quiz

The picture at right illustrates a 2016 seedling with a color problem I usually have trouble capturing and even describing. What is the problem?

More on the Petitti seminar next month, but the BIS comments above turned out to be pretty relevant Saturday, right?



Ron