



DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

CREEKSIDE GENEVEVE, B, FD, BI, FLOWER OF THE YEAR
Volume 4, Issue 2

February 2006

WWW.DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.ORG

FEBRUARY DAHLIA CHORES

Improving your soil

Although it is several months before you can actual plant dahlias in your garden, there are several things to do or at least consider in February.



TURKEY GRIT

Last month I discussed in detail ways to improve your garden soil in order to benefit this year's crop of dahlias. I mentioned adding fine bits of granite, "turkey grit" or 8's and 9's. Several people

asked what does this material look like. Here is a small pile of 8's and 9's with a dime on top to show the relationship in size. As you can see these pieces of granite are quite small but remember, you are adding them to your current soil that probably contains a lot of red, Georgia clay. Clay is basically a solid, compacted mass, high in nutrients but lacking air and therefore space needed for roots to grow and water to flow in order to reach the roots and nourish the plants, then drain away. When you incorporate this material or some other similar substance like perlite into your soil, you will add necessary air pockets and thereby loftiness and drainage to the soil, making it far more

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

DAHLIA SOC OF GEORGIA FEBRUARY MEETING

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20

7:30 P. M.

ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

GARDEN CLASSROOM (BASEMENT)

The February meeting will focus on getting ready for the upcoming growing season and what we can expect to see and do during the various stages of the growing season. As always some of our more experienced growers will be available to provide pertinent information

and advice. Come prepared to ask questions you might have about your garden and the cultivation of dahlias.

CORRECTIONS

November meeting is the 20th not the 18th.

I erroneously suggested adding vermiculite will increase the drainage and loftiness of clay soil. IT DOES NOT! In fact vermiculite can exacerbate clay soil problems. Perlite DOES HELP clay soil. BK

2006 ANNUAL CALENDAR

- FEB MEETING, FEB 20, ABG
- MARCH MEETING, MAR 20, ABG
- APRIL TUBER SALE, APR 17, ABG
- MAY TUBER SALE, MAY 15, ABG
- JUNE MEETING, JUNE 19, ABG
- JULY, ANNUAL PICNIC, TBA
- AUGUST MEETING, AUG 21, ABG
- CAROLINAS DAHLIA SHOW UNC ABORETUM, ASHEVILLE-SEPT 9 & 10
- NATIONAL DAHLIA SOCIETY DAHLIA SHOW, LONG ISLAND, NY SEPTEMBER 14-17
- TENNESSEE DAHLIA SHOW, CLARION HOTEL, CHATTA-NOOGA, SEP 23 & 24
- GEORGIA DAHLIA SHOW, ABG, ATLANTA, GA SEPT 30 & OCT 1
- ALABAMA DAHLIA SHOW, BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDEN, BIRMINGHAM, AL OCT 7 & 8
- GA NAT'L FAIR DAHLIA SHOW, PERRY, GA OCTOBER 11-13
- OCTOBER MEETING, MINI DAHLIA SHOW, OCT 16, ABG
- NOV MEETING, NOV 20, ABG
- CHRISTMAS PARTY— DEC, TBA

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

WE ARE SO GLAD TO HAVE EACH OF YOU AS NEW MEMBERS OF THE DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA.

**DIANNA LANGDON
TULSA, OKLAHOMA**

**SUSAN MCCOY
MARIETTA, GEORGIA**

**BETTY STEVENS
ERWIN, TENNESSEE**

During the past couple of years we have had a number of new members join our society from Georgia and other states in the South and other areas of the country. This month is no exception as we add one new member from Georgia, and two others from other states. There are no states in the South, West of Alabama, that have dahlia societies so we can fill a very large need to dahlia growers all over the South in helping them with growing their dahlias in the heat of the South. **ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIENDS TO JOIN THE DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA.**

GEORGIA GARDENERS WEBSITE GROUP

One of our members, Judy Gosa, has started an email gardening group. Gardening in the state of Georgia is the topic of this group. It doesn't matter if you're a recent transplant from another corner of the world, or if you're a native to Georgia with roots that reach deeper

than any of the plants we grow. Everyone is welcome! All that's required is a love of plants and a desire to be a positive part of the group. Let's follow the golden rule and treat one another with respect. So let's sow some seeds of kindness, share experiences, ideas,

friendships, and maybe even a plant, or a cutting or two. Have you found something that grows like a weed in our heat and humidity but looks fresh and fabulous all season? What's your favorite place to shop for plants? Please share! OK, Georgia gardeners let's grow!

2006 DUES

The new year is here so it is time to write one more check for your annual dues. If you joined in August 2005 or later your dues payment included all of 2006. The dues will be the same as in previous years, \$27 for an individual and \$ 30 for a family unit. Make your check out to The Dahlia Society of Georgia and mail to Henry Everett our Treasurer or you can pay him at our February meeting. Henry's address is: 2690 Gleneagles Drive, Tucker, GA 30084



ELSIE HOUSTON , A, ID, PK

THIS IS A WONDERFUL DAHLIA FOR THE SOUTHERN GARDEN THAT IS EASY TO GROW AND GIVES A LOT OF BLOOMS FOR AN A SIZED VARIETY. YOU MAY PURCHASE IT AT OUR TUBER SALES THIS SPRING.



GLENBANK TWINKLE M, C, DB, W/L

The annual publication, Dahlias of Today, is published by the Puget Sound Dahlia Society in the Seattle, Washington area. It is a wonderful publication that brings dahlia lovers up to date each year on all of the new dahlias of note that have been released or have gained recognition during the previous growing season. There is also information on releases from England and Australia plus other interesting articles about dahlias with many color pictures of dahlias. An interesting feature each year is a growers survey, usually by top growers in the Northwest, of their favorite dahlias in every size category. Also, a compact chart that shows on one page all of the winners of all of the shows in the Northwest. Many, but not all of the winners are those dahlias that grow well in all parts of the country and that we can grow here in the South.

All dahlia lovers will enjoy this publication and is a must have each year. We think so highly of it we have made it a free gift for all new members that joined after our show last Fall.

We hope to have copies available at our February meeting for purchase (\$6 each) if they arrive in time. If not they will be available at our March meeting. For those wishing to order your copies directly send \$8 to: **Sandra Boley, Puget Sound Dahlia Association, 2027 62nd Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98178, Tele # 206-772-3123 email, sbgseattle@aol.com**

(cont from page 1 FEBRUARY DAHLIA CHORES) beneficial to your dahlias. In the case of granite, it will also serve as a source of slow release potassium and phosphorous for as much as 10 years. To know the nutrient value of your current soil, now is the time to have a soil test. Gather 5 – 8 scoops of soil from your garden, at the expected depth of

the plants roots, screen out as much debris as possible, and submit to your County Extension agent (check the white pages for your county). They will send in the soil for testing and in several weeks you will receive a report of your garden's overall pH and any recommendations for liming or adding of fertilizers.

There may be a small fee (about \$5) for this testing but it will probably be the best \$5 spent for gardening in 2006 as well as future years.

Here is how pH works and why it is so important to know. There is a scale where a pH reading of 7 means your soil is basically neutral- neither acidic nor alkaline. Readings below 7 indicates some degree of acidity and basically a little bit of acid is good for plants. Readings above 7 indicates a degree of alkaline soil. Now, as in all things, too much of anything is not good. Too much acid or too much alkaline will poison a plant. Readings of 6.0 to around 6.5 are desirable for dahlias. If your soil test comes back and the reading is about 5, you will probably be advised to add some amount of lime to "sweeten " the soil up into the 6's range. In Georgia we basically have acidic soils and a recommendation of lime is likely. It will all depend, of course, on whether the soil has been used recently to grow other crops. When applying lime, remember that it can take up to 6 months

to fully alter your soil. Lime applied in February will still be working in August. My advice here is to get the soil tested now and apply powdered lime to the top of your garden, now. Do not plow or dig it in. Rains will carry it into the soil. Granular lime will probably take too long to break down and even longer to be incorporated into the soil, so use powdered lime.

In case your soil test comes back with a 7 or above, there will be a recommended dosage of fertilizer to apply. Fertilizer generally works a lot faster than lime so you will have a time advantage in this case. An important point to remember is a pH reading too low or too high means the nutrients will stay locked up in your soil and therefore unavailable to your plants, regardless of the amount of fertilizer present in your soil.

Inspect your tubers

If you have stored dahlia tubers from last season, be sure to check them for over all conditions.

Some may have a whitish mold- this is harmless and can be washed or wiped off. If you find some have shriveled, mist them with



warm water and recheck in 2 weeks. Also check for any signs (or smells) of rot. G e n t l y squeeze a tuber to test for firmness. It should feel solid, like a potato. If you feel some mushiness, slice through the tuber at that spot. You will see rotting material. Continue to slice off rot, going toward where the tuber joins the old stalk, until you reach firm tuber. Tubers showing only partial rot may be saved by shearing off the bad parts, back to healthy flesh,

and then coat the wound with a fungicide like sulfur. You do not need much of the tuber to successfully grow a healthy dahlia. Again, recheck in 2 weeks.

Enjoy the downtime and stay warm. Spring is coming.

Brian Killingsworth

WINTER PICTURES FROM NEW YORK

Ed Bonci and his wife Pam Jenson, our members in New York, sent these pictures of Pam and their dog Emma enjoying the snow this past Sunday.

