



DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

CREEKSIDE GENEVEVE, B, FD,
BI, FLOWER OF THE YEAR

June 2006

WWW.DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.ORG

SUMMER IS HERE

School is out, we have already had temperatures in the 90's and there has been a definite lack of rain so far this season. Is the drought returning? We certainly hope not after suffering through 5 years of it a while back. We are in that period where caring for our dahlias is most important in order to have those quality blooms in late summer and the fall. Brian's culture article this month covers many of those items that need to be accom-

plished so read it carefully and then come to our June meeting to learn even more about SUMMER CARE of your dahlias. This is always one of our best meetings of the year as we will discuss all of the aspects of growth during the summer like how to keep them growing well, mulching, watering, fertilization, diseases, dahlia virus, bugs, spraying, disbudding, disbranching, anything and every



JOHN GEURIN 'S 2006 KELVIN FLOODLIGHT

thing that is important in growing your dahlias. We will have a panel discussion by some of our more experienced growers to answer your questions. You may want to get there a little early this month so you can select from the FREE grower overstock of tubers and plants that usually show up at the June meeting. If you are looking for more dahlias for your garden or need some replacements for some you have lost or may lose this is the time to be at our meeting. You may just want to grow some as pot roots for next year. Come to the June mtg.

JUNE MEETING

MONDAY, JUNE 19

7:30 pm

ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

BASEMENT CLASSROOM

JUNE- GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

By now you have probably planted all of your dahlias. In earlier newsletters we have covered preparing the garden as well as planting. So now what do we do? June is a good time to start some cultivating habits that we need to follow throughout the summer and fall, right to until frost. If we do practice these (cont page 2)

2006 ANNUAL CALENDAR

- JUNE MEETING, JUNE 19, ABG
- JULY, ANNUAL PICNIC, JULY 29 AT DUNAWAY GARDENS IN NEWNAN, GA. WWW.DUNAWAYGARDENS.COM
- 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, CHATTANOOGA TRADE & CONVENTION CENTER, CHATTANOOGA, SEP 23 & 24
- GEORGIA DAHLIA SHOW, ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN, ATLANTA, GA SEPT 30 & OCT 1
- ALABAMA DAHLIA SHOW, MCWANE SCIENCE CENTER, BIRMINGHAM, AL SATURDAY, OCT 7
- 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

EZRA & ANN HOWINGTON
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

ALYCE WALDROP &
MARI ALMON
SMYRNA, GEORGIA

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

cultivation habits, then the reward of a bountiful and beautiful "crop" of dahlias should be realized.

Develop Good Cultivation Habits

You should have placed a stake or other support device in the ground before planting your dahlia tubers or plants. Whether you planted dahlia tubers or plants, you have probably noticed how quickly dahlias grow. You can usually count on a dahlia plant to gain a pair of leaves a week. This rate of growth requires us to constantly monitor each plant to be sure that we are tying the plants to the stake about every 12" to 18". Baling twine or pipe cleaners (found in the craft section of stores) or covered twist ties should do the trick. Do not tie too tightly because the dahlias will also grow in width during the summer and too tight binding can damage the stalks. After about two

months of growing, dahlia stalks can be 1"- 2" in diameter. And remember that the average dahlia plant is about 4' tall and many can get to 6' or more. That's a lot of growth for about 4 ½ months. You will find that you need to keep tying the plant throughout the growing season. Those of you who chose to use tomato cages or other trellis like material need to continue capturing and containing the plant growth within these enclosures.

Dahlias, if left to their own devices, would grow straight up without side branches and would produce one terminal bloom. We don't want that to happen. Instead, we want to develop bushier, well balanced plants to ensure we have a multitude of blooms throughout the blooming season (which for dahlias can be mid August until frost). To get these multiple blooms we must pinch out the growing tip of each plant. This step is referred to as stopping. Dahlias produce a rather thick stalk with a pair of offsetting (one on either side) leaves. The next week there will be another pair of leaves, and so on. If you pinch out the very top of the

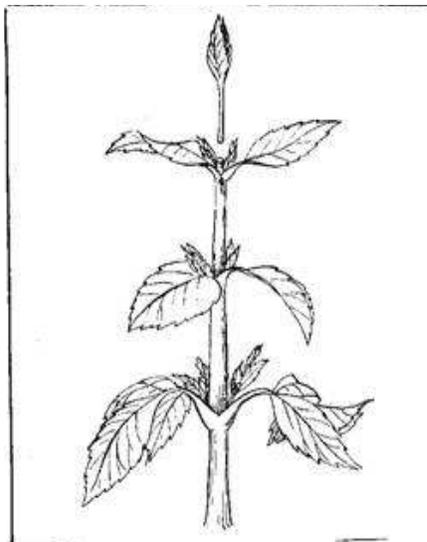
plant then you will soon see a "baby" branch begin to appear where the leave projects from the stalk. For example, if you pinch out the top of a dahlia plant that has 3 pairs of leaves, then in a few days you will see the plant beginning to produce 6 branches.

Dahlias usually produce 3 buds at the end of each branch. By stopping the plant in the above example, we can expect to produce 18 dahlia blooms (6 branches X 3 buds @ branch). Granted this is an example and you might get a few more or a few less, but these rules allow us to produce a much bushier plant and a very prolific bloomer (continued on next page)



AITARA DIEDEM BB, FD, RW R/W

A BEAUTIFUL NEW DAHLIA THAT
GROWS WELL IN THE DEEP SOUTH



CG NORDIC B, C, W

ANNUAL PICNIC

JULY 29TH

Next month we will hold our annual picnic and this year we will be going to Dunaway Gardens which is located due North of Newnan which is about 20 minutes South of the airport on I-85. You can go to their web site for those with a computer handy. The address is www.dunawaygardens.com Please take a look at their home page to learn about the Gardens. This location is unique in that they grow around 200 DAHLIAS each year and hopefully some of them will be in bloom when we are there. There is an entrance fee to get into the garden which is \$10 for adults and \$8 for children but is well worth it in order to see all of the different areas of the garden and those dahlias.

We always have a great time at our annual picnic and this year should be no exception. The Society provides the meat and drinks and then we ask each member to bring a vegetable dish, salad or dessert for the group to enjoy. So please put July 29th on your calendar and come and enjoy a good time with your fellow dahlia lovers and take a look at Dunaway Gardens.

Directions and additional information will be included in the July newsletter.

For those without a computer I have attached a copy of their home page from their web site.

(cont from page 2) A simple rule to follow is to pinch out the top when the plant reaches 12" in height. **

You are probably noticing that weeds grow about as fast as dahlias. You will want to take time and eliminate as many weeds as possible then mulch with about 4" of some organic material like wheat straw. The mulch will not only help keep the weeds down but will help to maintain the moisture level in the soil while lowering the temperature of the soil. Some growers place several layers of dampened newspaper under their plants before applying the mulch. It makes an excellent weed barrier.

As the mulch deteriorates during the season, it will help enrich the soil for future crops. Do not place the mulch right up against the stalk of the plant because that can lead to rot and mildew problems as well as to serve as a haven for damaging insects. You should also continually remove the bottom pairs of leaves as the plant grows. Keep doing this throughout the summer. This action will allow more air to circulate under the plants and help ward off various mildew problems.

Feed and water the plants

Dahlias are heavy feeders and heavy drinkers. A side dressing of a well balanced fertilizer (something like 10-10-10 or 12-12-12), preferably a time release feeder, is much appreciated by your plants. Until mid to late August, dahlias do well with such formulas. We will discuss other fertilizers later.

Dahlias like about 1 "of water a week, either from rain or a hose. Watering the ground above the roots is better than overhead watering. Soaker hoses are great for this and less labor intense. If, however, you find your plants wilting at mid day, a short blast of water will be a refreshing relief.

Inspect your plants for bugs and damage

Initially your garden and plants may look pristine and healthy. Make it a habit to closely inspect your plants, particularly the newest growth. Aphids love to suck the juices from new growth. There is a symbiotic relationship between ants and aphids. Ants herd aphids in order to reap the "honeydew" produced by aphids, so keep an eye out for any more than single ants. General insecticides will rid your plants of both.



APHIDS



Slugs love lettuce and other tender greens.

SLUGS

Slugs can be found anywhere in your garden- on the soil, in pots, on your plants, etc.

You will never wipe out all slugs, but by keeping you garden clean and free of debris will eliminate many places where they hide. Beer traps are known to entice and drown slugs. Ground beetles dine on slugs so be kind to them. Commercial slug bait is available but be dangerous to pets.



Telltale yellowing and webs are easier to see.

SPIDER MITES

Small webs covering coppery colored, lower leaves that curl, dry up and turn yellow are often times a sign of spider mite damage. Particularly in hot and dry weather. A suspected leaf can be shaken over a piece of white paper. Small dark, pepper grain sized spots falling onto the paper are probably spider mites. Treatment is complex and best addressed in a detailed discussion. A hard blast of cold water on the underside of leaves will remove many spider mites.

Early in the season small holes in dahlia plant leaves are a good sign that flea beetles have arrived. These BB (as in BB gun) sized black varmints can be controlled with Sevin but remember that is a contact killer and will need to be applied often. Their damage is usually minor and they will disappear by early July. However, Sevin kills all insects, including good ones.



FLEA BEETLE

Take care of yourself

I can not over emphasize the importance of protecting yourself from the sun. Before going out in the garden, even on cloudy days, cover any exposed skin using a sun screen of at least 30 SPF. Be sure to protect your ears where the skin is very thin. Even though we are having mild temperatures so far, the sun is high and the danger is very real. It will be so until late September. Wear a good, broad brim hat and long sleeves if possible. I work almost every day in the garden and am there often in the middle of the day. Several years back I came up with, for lack of a better term, a “rolling umbrella, tool, towel, and water carrier”. This contraption gives me shade while working on individual plants as well as saving me trips to find tools or other needed devices. You can move it around to position the umbrella between you and the sun and believe me, there is about a 10 to 20 degree temperature difference between sun and shade. A concrete block on the bottom tray keeps it from getting top heavy. Drink plenty of liquids and begin drinking them BEFORE you become thirsty.

Brian Killingsworth

**** NOTE:** Exhibitors of dahlias will expend a lot of effort trying to time the arrival of the dahlia’s first bloom to coincide with the dates of dahlia shows. They will also limit the amount of branches and buds that form thereby producing larger blooms. But that’s another subject all together and this article is a “how to” for gardeners who want to cut plenty of beautiful dahlia blooms for their home and to share with friends and neighbors.



CONTRAPTION