



# DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

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

AUGUST 2006

[WWW.DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.ORG](http://WWW.DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.ORG)

## THE HEAT OF THE 2006 SUMMER

Global warming, the ice caps are melting back further than ever before, new records have been set in over 70 cities so far this summer...it has been hot and our DAHLIAS look like it too. Spider mites, grasshoppers and every other bug in the garden are attacking our plants so what can we do to get our DAHLIAS to bloom here in August and the fall? Well, come to the August meeting and get a late season check up on DAHLIA culture and

what to do for them between now & frost.

Our annual show will be held in September so we won't have a regular meeting but our August meeting will also cover all of the aspects of preparing ourselves for the show in September and the mini show at the October meeting. John Kreiner will show us how to transport our DAHLIAS,



CG FORTE, B, SC, Y 2006 INTRO GROWING IN JOHN & GALE GEURIN'S GARDEN

**AUGUST MEETING**

**AUGUST 21ST**

**7:30 PM**

**BASEMENT CLASSROOM**

**ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN**

## AUGUST CHORES IN THE DAHLIA GARDEN

### GENERAL

August is the toughest month of the season for growing dahlias, at least here in the South. The day-time temperatures easily reach the 90s and stay there late into the afternoon. I am sure you have noticed how your dahlias and many other plants begin to wilt around noon and stay that way

how to stage them in the show including some tricks to use, and what items we need to have to accomplish the staging of our DAHLIAS in the show. It should be a fun time and we will try some hands on experience to give members a chance to hone their skills. Showing your dahlias is FUN and the more experienced members will SHOW YOU HOW TO DO IT. Even if you don't show in the annual show the mini show is designed for new members and those late season blooms. So come to the August meeting.

## 2006 ANNUAL CALENDAR

- AUGUST MEETING, AUG 21, BASEMENT CLASSROOM ABG
- CAROLINAS DAHLIA SHOW UNC ARBORETUM, 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 MEMBER

**ADAM ROACH  
MARIETTA, GEORGIA**

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

often until, either they are out of direct sunlight, or maybe 4 p.m.

The plants withdraw water from the foliage to protect the root system. Plants will re-hydrate during the night and start the process over again. It is the daily wilt/re-hydrate cycle. Dahlias particularly suffer from these conditions because of the rapid growth they must undertake to produce such lush growth. Were they more woody in nature, they could better withstand the heat.

Because of this situation just described, let me reiterate the virtues of mulch. By mulching your plants you help protect the shallow roots from the blazing sun. Cooler soil temperatures are far less stressful and any reduction of stress (just like us humans) will make for healthier plants. Having mulch in August is one of the best things you can do for your dahlias. By then your plants should be tall enough to shade out any weeds still trying to compete for nutrients. But, had you mulched back in July or even June, your dahlias would

be even better, having benefited up to now, both from cooler soil and smothering of many weeds.

### DISBUDDING

Why am I going on about mid-day heat when we all know that “only mad dogs and Englishmen” go out in the noon day sun? Because this is the time of the year when your dahlias are beginning to produce a multitude of buds. If you have ever grown peach or apple trees then you know that they produce far more blooms than needed to produce a good crop of fruit. You have to remove about 2/3 of their blooms so they don't over produce fruit, weigh down the branching structure and thereby break many branches, leading to possible introductions of pest and/or diseases. A similar logic can be applied to most dahlias.

By leaving all buds on a dahlia bush and by allowing all of the buds to reach maturity, you stand a good chance of having a top-heavy plant that suffers broken stalks. And I can guarantee a pest or two and maybe even a disease will enter the broken stalk of dahlias. The plants are too succulent and inviting to be left alone by the multitude of marauding insects, fungi and diseases.

Whether you are trying to grow the perfect bloom for the winning ribbon, or whether you want a beautiful bouquet of healthy dahlias to give to a friend, **you too need to eliminate some of the excess dahlia buds** that begin to form in August. In fact, for the rest of the season, right up until the first killing frost, you will probably find that you spent the most time in your

dahlia patch, disbudding the excess buds produced by your dahlias. Remember, the dahlia is trying to produce seeds to insure its survival until next season. It has to produce flowers first to attract pollinators who, in turn, cross pollinate to make possible the all important seeds. We disbud and the plants kick into overdrive producing more buds. By our staying ahead of the production of seeds, we force the dahlias to attempt to produce more blooms. This manipulation keeps the dahlias working right up until frost. That's also why we feed and water them so much and try to ward off the various pests and diseases who try “to visit havoc” upon our gardens.

Dahlias generally make 3-5 buds on each lateral (branch). In the photo below there are 4 buds: the central (main) bud, a small bud very close to the central bud, and two smaller buds emerging from the nearest node (pair of leaves). In most cases you should remove the 3 small buds and leave the main bud to mature into the single bloom for that lateral.



# ANNUAL JUDGING SEMINAR

Saturday, August 19th our annual judging seminar will again be held at the home of Dan & Paula Pinholster in Cartersville. Gene Boeke, our American Dahlia Society Regional Vice President, will conduct the seminar drawing on his many years of experience and knowledge of dahlias and dahlia judging for our edification on how to judge dahlias correctly. The seminar will start at 10:00 AM and conclude by 4:00 PM. Lunch will be provided by the Society. All judges and wanna-be judges are invited to attend the seminar.

Even if you have never judged before this is a good opportunity to learn some of the basics in dahlia judging and then if you would like to be an apprentice judge at our annual show you may do so with some knowledge. Judging is fun so come and learn some of the aspects of judging. Paula & Dan have invited those members that would just like to come and see their garden to come and join in also. You won't be disappointed and there will be lots of dahlias blooming.

Their address is 73 Blackfoot Trail, Cartersville, GA. Their telephone number is 770-382-8110.

Once you have disbudded (removed) the 3 small buds, all of the energy assigned to the lateral will go into producing that one central bloom. (See photo below.) The stem will get longer, larger and stronger. The bud will enlarge and slowly open, showing color as the petals unfurl.

Depending on the size of bloom you can generally predict when the bloom will be fully open and therefore con-



sidered mature. The rule of thumb is: AA and A size blooms take 28 days to open from a pea size bud. B size takes about 24 days and smaller BBs, miniatures, balls and pompoms, about 21 days. These intervals are averages and depend largely on the weather and other growing conditions.

Notice in the second photo how the lateral has become longer and the distance between nodes has also elongated. Dahlias generally produce a set of leaves each week. From the first photo till the second has required about about 2 weeks. You could probably cut a fully mature bloom in 10 - 14 days. Notice at the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> node, there are new laterals growing vigorously and will soon bear their own 3-5 buds that will again require your attention.

What I am trying to convey is the disbudding process which starts about now in August, will continue until frost and will allow you to have a multitude of large, healthy blooms with nice length of healthy stems on which to

display the dahlias' beautiful shape and color.

At the top of this article I discussed the wilting experienced around noon. For both your sake and the sake of you dahlia plant, you don't want to be out in your garden at noon trying to disbud some of the excess dahlia buds. You want to do this either early in the morning while the plants are fresh or late in the evening when they have sufficiently recovered from the stress of the heat. Early morning is the best time because the plants have had an entire night to rehydrate. The leaves, stalks and most importantly, the bud stems, will be at their strongest and therefore easiest with which to work. The crunchy bud stems can be easily removed with a simple twisting motion. If you want to elongate the stem you can eliminate the second set of growth nodules with the same twisting motion.

## MAKING STRONGER STEMS

Dahlia stems have a chore in keeping some of these large blooms upright, particularly when it rains. The blooms absorb a lot of water within its petals and many a dahlia grower has been saddened to visit the garden shortly after a heavy downpour only to find their prized blooms hanging upside down. There are also some varieties that appear not to be strong enough to hold up the blooms that it creates.

Several years ago Gene Boeke shared with me a solution to this problem. Potassium is the 3<sup>rd</sup> element listed in fertilizer descriptions. It helps dahlias produce tubers and it helps dahlias strengthen their stems. In particular, Gene told me about a mixture of potassium nitrate, 13.75-0-44, that is available in a prilled form (coated). The supplier is Regal Chemical, located at exit 12, Hwy. 400, in Alpharetta -770-475-4837. [Since it comes in 50 lb bags it has been obtained by the society and made available in smaller containers.]

You can scatter it around the base of the plant and water it in and /or spray on the foliage with no fear of burning. I use it in both ways and I try to begin spraying by mid August, at least twice, about ten days to 2 weeks apart. There will be a noticeable hardening of the stems shortly after the second spraying and a continuation of hardness until sometime in late October.

## BEWARE OF STEM BORERS



Squash vine cut open to show borer

If you will look at the bottom of you dahlia plants you will probably be surprised at how big the stalks have become. With all of the concentration on the leaves and buds we often forget to check out the whole plant. This time of the season you might find a visitor to your garden that is looking for a winter home. August is when various borers are beginning to set up

“housekeeping” in your garden. I had this problem several years back and sought help from Gilbert Johnson, one of our finest growers who unfortunately passed away several winters ago. Always the Southern gentleman, Gilbert had a slow drawl that I loved to hear. *“Before they show up, use Dipel. Dust late in the evening and just let the dust drift across the dahlias.”* Dipel is Bt and it works very well. Gilbert went on to say if they’ve already arrived then use a systemic like Cygon or Orthene and “hope to get rid of them.”

### ENJOY THE BLOOMS

All of the article up to now can be viewed as work. One last “chore” is to enjoy the blooms that are beginning to appear. Cut yourself a bouquet for the house and enjoy it. Take some photos of these beauties. We now have several photo sections in our annual show and besides, a few nice photos of your own dahlias and garden will help you through the long winter. Study the complex blooms and view the color from all angles and be proud that you have helped harvest one of God’s many miracles. Life is good. BK

### A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

Thanks to everyone that helped in getting the picnic together specifically Blair Walker and Frank McComb. Thanks to everyone that came to the beautiful Dunaway Gardens. The food was great and the fellowship was outstanding. There were lots of dahlias growing and we enjoyed seeing them and the lovely gardens. Below is a picture and you can go to our website and see more when they are posted.



## GROWING TIP OF THE MONTH

In his article this month Brian discusses the formation of buds on your plants and the flowers that open from them. Sometimes we don’t get the bloom we would like to have and there can be a variety of reasons, not enough sun, soil PH, not enough water, spider mites, disease or a lack of proper nutrients in our Georgia clay.

If that seems to be the case with your dahlias then they may need a bloom enhancer if the other issues are taken care of by the grower. Anyway, it won’t hurt and should increase your bloom by using a bloom enhancer on your plants every week or two. You may start when you feel or see buds forming on your plants which should be this month and through the rest of the season. The bloom enhancer stimulates the production of the blooms on the laterals so those that disbud will be busy in that regard but there should be more blooms on your plant.

There are two products that I will recommend. The first is called Alaska Mor-Bloom. It is a fish based fertilizer and has an analysis of 0-10-10. It is an excellent product and it can be found at any gardening store that carries Alaska products. Lowe’s and Home Depot do carry Alaska products. If that doesn’t work then go to [www.wormsway.com](http://www.wormsway.com) and you can order it there or any other internet gardening stores.

The second product is called Maxsea Seaweed fertilizer and has an analysis of 3-20-20 and can be found online at [www.charliesgreenhouse.com](http://www.charliesgreenhouse.com). This is a wonderful fertilizer for dahlias and as you can see the seaweed/kelp base covers the need for the micro nutrients that we discussed last month. The high potash number will help your tubers to form if you haven’t gotten any of the potassium nitrate. You can use these products as a drench or in a foliar spray.

**NO MEETING IN SEPTEMBER**

**COME TO THE SHOW SEPT 30 & OCT 1**