



# DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Issue 2

February 2007

JESSICA BB-C-FL

DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.ORG

## PATIO & SOUTHEASTERN SHOWS

The Patio Show, after a slow start, turned out to be a very good show for us with many visitors to our booth and many signing up for the Dahlia Alert information. The Southeastern is always a great show with lots of great things to see and lots of visitors that stop at our table each year. The booth next to ours at the patio show was the State Botanical Garden of Georgia which is located in

Athens. Did you know they have a DAHLIA GARDEN? Yes they do and they are moving it this year along with some other flower beds to a new location which will be very accessible to the general public which is not the case now. This construction is just starting so when it will be finished is still an issue with planting.



A shot from the 2006 Show at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. Seems like a long time ago with all of our cold weather.

**FEBRUARY MEETING**

**FEBRUARY 19TH**

**7:30 PM**

**GARDEN CLASSROOM**

**BASEMENT**

**ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN**

**Do You Have Frogs in Your Garden?** If you don't have frogs on hand you may want

to add a few to your garden after You hear our February Program Speaker. Kathryn Dodgen of Flower Frogs R Us Will present a program on the use of Flower Frogs in arranging flowers from your garden. Kathryn will display a few of her antique Flower Frogs from her large collection and give us a brief history Of Flower Frogs and their use.

Kathryn will also have flower frogs available to purchase.

**2007**

### ANNUAL CALENDAR

- FEBRUARY MEETING, FEB 19 ABG
- MARCH MEETING, MARCH 19 ABG
- APRIL TUBER SALE, APRIL 16 ABG EXHIBIT HALL
- MAY TUBER SALE, MAY 21 ABG EXHIBIT HALL
- JUNE MEETING, JUNE 18 ABG
- JULY MEETING/PICNIC, CREEK-SIDE DAHLIA FARM, AUGUST 4
- AUGUST MEETING, AUG 20 ABG
- NATIONAL DAHLIA SHOW, SEPT. 6-10, ST CHARLES, IL
- CAROLINAS DAHLIA SHOW SEPT. 15-16, UNC ARBORETUM, ASHEVILLE, NC
- TENNESSEE DAHLIA SHOW 22-23 SEPT. CHATTANOOGA
- GEORGIA DAHLIA SHOW SEPT, SEPT 29/30 ABG
- ALABAMA DAHLIA SHOW OCT. 6, MCSWAIN SCIENCE CTR, BIRMINGHAM. AL
- GA NAT'L FAIR DAHLIA SHOW
- MINI-SHOW OCTOBER ABG
- NOVEMBER MEETING NOVEMBER NOV 19, ABG
- DECEMBER CHRISTMAS PARTY TBA

## 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.

In previous newsletters I discussed in detail ways to



improve your garden soil in order to benefit this year's crop of dahlias. One point worth repeating is the addition of 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 is 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 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. Avoid adding sand because most available sand is too finely grained to help.

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

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We are so pleased to welcome the following new members to the Dahlia Society of Georgia. We hope to see you at some of our meetings or other functions during the year.

JANIS CLEVINGER

ACWORTH, GA

DAVID & BRENDA ELY

MARIETTA, GA

MANSFIELD & GENELLE JENNINGS

HAWKINSVILLE, GA

DANNY LENTZ & DIANNE MORGAN

ROSWELL, GA

ROSALIE TRIPP

SUWANNE, GA

RUTH USHER

MARIETTA, GA

WE HAVE A NEW MEMBER WELCOMING PACKAGE FOR EACH OF YOU THAT YOU WILL BE RECEIVING LATER THIS MONTH.

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 2007 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 overall 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



## **MEMBERSHIP IN THE DS OF GA**

We would like to encourage our members from 2006 to renew their membership for 2007 and other growers to join. Last year I had a couple of comments from some new members that their dahlias didn't do well or they had a hard time growing their dahlias and as I think back to when I started growing dahlias I CAN SAY THE SAME THING. I began growing dahlias in San Antonio, Texas and you talk about being discouraged fast in the heat of South Texas, it was me. I read everything I could get my hands on and applied many of those items designed for the Seattle area and of course they didn't work. We finally got some good blooms and the rest is history.

We didn't have a Dahlia Society in Texas or the internet so it was my love of the flower that carried me through these trial and error experiences and JUST NOT GIVING UP.

I want to encourage all of you members and other growers NOT TO GIVE UP growing dahlias. Being a member of the DS of GA you have so many opportunities to gain the expert information about growing dahlias and putting that knowledge to work. We all still learn something new about dahlias and how to grow them every year. The beauty of those blooms in September and October each year is what all dahlia growers look forward to and this year is always better than last year.



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.

BK 2/6/07

## **SOUTHERN STATES DAHLIA SOCIETY SPRING MEETING**

The Spring business meeting of the Southern States Dahlia Society will be held at 12 Noon, March 17 at Wally's Restaurant in Chattanooga. The restaurant is located at the first exit in Tennessee going North on I-75.

We would like to encourage designated representatives and other interested members to plan on attending this important meeting.

### **2007 DUES**

Our treasurer, Henry Everett, indicates that some of you have not sent in your dues for this year. We would like to encourage you to pay your 2007 dues which are \$27 for an individual and \$30 for a household, or about the cost of one tank of gas unless you drive a Mini-Cooper. It is still a great value to be a member of a great group of Dahlia growers. Send in that check to Henry Everett, 2690 Gleneagles Drive, Tucker, GA 30084

### **SHOW WORKERS**

We would like to thank everyone that worked the Garden & Patio Show and the Southeastern Flower Show. It was a great time and we talked to lots of dahlia growers and those that want to grow dahlias for the first time. Your help was so appreciated by me and by the club. We hope you had a good time and enjoyed the displays at the two shows. We look forward to your help again next year.



APRIL DAWN B-ID-LB W/PK