



DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

BO-JOY B-LC-Y

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DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.ORG

READY TO PLANT YOUR DAHLIAS?

Getting ready to plant your dahlias is such an important task as the soil content and the depth of the dig is all important in order to have a successful season. Most of the larger growers know how to do this so we are directing these comments to the small growers that probably don't dig their tubers every year. First, if you would like to dig your tubers and divide them or to improve your soil, the

first week in April is the time to dig them. Some eyes will be showing so it will be an easy task. Just make sure you have an eye with each tuber. Let them air dry for 24 hours and then put them in a plastic grocery bag where air can't shrivel them and keep them there until you are ready to plant again. Cont on page 4



SHOW & TELL A-LC-DB R/Y

A MOST BEAUTIFUL AND UNUSUAL DAHLIA THAT WILL BE ON SALE AT OUR SPRING TUBER AUCTIONS. THIS WAS A WINNING BLOOM AT THE 2005 TENNESSEE DAHLIA SHOW.

MARCH MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 19TH
7:30 PM
GARDEN CLASSROOM
BASEMENT

ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

The March meeting will focus on two separate areas in growing dahlias. Brian Killingsworth will discuss

and demonstrate how to take cuttings from your tuber(s). Dan Pinholster will discuss the care of your plants after they are out of the ground to include a spraying program. The floor is open for all questions you might have in planting your dahlias, too. Come and learn/refresh your techniques for caring for your plants this season.

2007

ANNUAL CALENDAR

- 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 CONVENTION CENTER
- GEORGIA DAHLIA SHOW 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

MARCH CHORES IN THE DAHLIA GARDEN; NOT- MUSING ABOUT PAST GARDENS

In between tornado warnings and tornado watches, we're having some nice days when we can work in the yard. "Herds" of robins are passing through the yard on a daily basis. In fact, last week I saw a hummingbird looking for food at our old feeder left up from last year. Bluebirds are already checking out last year's house, assuring them that I've cleaned it out for their arrival at some yet unknown move-in day.

Now is a good time to take advantage of a pretty, warm day and get out to your garden. With all of the recent rain the soil might be too wet to work, but you can clean up some of the surrounding areas. Get rid of old plant stalks that might be left over from last year. Pull out your plant stakes and tomato cages. You'll probably find more wear and tear than you imagined. Most likely, when you were putting last year's garden to rest you were in a hurry and not very careful to inspect for signs of rust and or decay. When the soil finally warms to the desirable planting temperature of 70 degrees you will want to insert your stakes before you plant your dahlia tubers or plants.

For those using rebar stakes, it would be a good idea to use a steel brush or steel wool to remove all dried dirt and visible rust. If not too many or, you really feel energetic, I'd recommend that now would be a good time to paint your stakes with some rust resistant paint. It will add years to the life of the stakes. Most wooden stakes are good for only one season. Carefully check any that you've previously used for signs of cracks and/or rot. You don't want a disaster in the middle of the season when your dahlias are 4' to 6' tall and needing a new replacement stake.

IT'S MORE THAN JUST ABOUT GROWING FLOWERS

Getting back to bluebirds, I've been fortunate over the years to have bluebirds repeatedly take up residence in the birdhouse installed at the front of our dahlia garden. Many times we have been treated to two batches of babies in a single season. They seem to know that I'm not spraying and it is perfectly safe to lay and hatch their eggs while we walk up and

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

**DOUG & BRENDA BAILEY
MCDONOUGH, GA**

**PEGI BLACK
DAHLONEGA, GA**

**JOANNA WELSH
LITHONIA, GA**

**STEVE WILLIAMS
HOLLY SPRINGS, GA**

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

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

The cutoff for inclusion in the 2007 membership directory will be April 1st. You may still send in your dues after that date and remain in good standing as a member for 2007 but your name and address will not be included in the directory. We encourage everyone to maintain their membership and help continue to make the DS of GA to be one of the premier flower societies in Atlanta and the South.

down the rows working with the plants. We've learned to hear the distinctive "quarrelsome" voice of a parent who wants to come into the feeder yet feels that we are too close. We try to take a quick break on a nearby bench and are then treated to the beautiful parents and sometimes even a yearling from the prior season, swooping into the birdhouse to feed the chicks. Every year I'm amazed to see how bluebirds can fly straight to, and then, into the opening hole without the need of a perch.

Since bluebirds set up home before the first dahlia is planted, they particularly enjoy checking out the surface of our newly worked beds for insects. Their quest for protein helps reduce some of the many varmints that come out when the soil begins to warm (cut worms for example). Since the supporting stakes are in place, the mature bluebirds use these perches as excellent advantage points from which to observe their next meal, and the next, and the next. It's a fine example of a symbiotic relationship between the birds and us gardeners.

A real thrill comes when you see the babies out testing their wings by flying to a nearby dahlia stake. They finally make it and bobble on their tiny perch while gawking around, as if to say "Hey, look at me!" We are always a little sad when they leave but throughout the summer you'll hear them first and sometimes you'll spot them checking out the "old home place".



Last year I kept seeing a pair of cardinals disappear into a Cherokee rose bush by the barn. I waited until the babies had hatched and then investigated. The following photo is what I found. Note the heavy use of old dahlia tags in building the nest. Just this week I saw a pair of

cardinals in the same bush, checking out the remnants of the nest. I bet that cardinal young will again be raised in that very same nest.

Several years back, on a warm spring afternoon, I came across a snapping turtle burying her eggs in one of our dahlia beds. It was about 3pm, and she was oblivious to me standing there watching her dig the hole, lay the eggs, and then cover over them. She then calmly, and at a turtle's pace, returned to the woods. I left them alone and to the best of my knowledge, the dogs never found the clutch of eggs.

DAHLIA QUESTIONS

Q: When do I plant my dahlias?

A: When the ground temperature reaches 70 degrees, around the 1st of May.

Q: What depth do I plant my tubers?

A: 3–5 inches below the surface of the soil. Lay the tuber horizontal with growing tip pointing to the sky.

Q: Do I water my tubers in when I plant them?

A: The water in the tuber and the Spring rains will be sufficient unless it is very dry.

Q: I knocked the growing tip off handling the tuber. Do I throw it away?

A: Two or more eyes will form and it should be planted.

Q: Where can I purchase tubers?

A: Go to www.dahlias.net and a list of growers and their catalogs is available. Also, the DS of GA annual tuber auctions will be held in April & May where quality tubers will be available. See the calendar P.1



CHEROKEE BEAUTY AA-ID-PK

A WONDERFUL HEAT TOLERANT DAHLIA

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.

DAHLIAS OF TODAY

The 2007 edition of "Dahlias of Today" has arrived and will be available to members at the March meeting for a cost of \$7. If you can't attend the meeting a copy can be mailed to your home for the same cost plus \$2 for the shipping. Please call me or email me with your order. 770-447-1405

New members will receive a free copy as part of their welcome package.



WESTON PIRATE M-C-DR

A VERY NICE MINIATURE DARK RED
DAHLIA IN THE 2006 ALABAMA
SHOW.

(CONT FROM P 1) When you are ready to plant you need to prepare the soil by digging it out to a depth of at least 12". You ask why so deep? Dahlias must drain well and in order to make that happen the clay must be dug deep enough for the water to drain away from the tubers. We want a lite soil one where the roots can easily grow to pick up the nutrients. Then we must amend the soil and the best way for a small grower to do that is to, as one of our members told me the other day, she has been adding Nature's Helper and Black Kow cow manure to her beds for the past 10 years, use these products or a similar product each year or compost if you have it.

Dahlias love organic material to the point that if you don't use it in your soil structure your blooming season may be less than spectacular. Black Kow is a great product that you can purchase at a big box store or if you have access to horse manure you can use that to provide organic material to your flowers. Black Kow won't burn your plants and if you don't dig your plants each year you can just work some into the top of the soil around your plants and still get the same effect as the rain will wash the nutrients into the ground where your plants can use them.

Using these techniques will ensure your dahlias will get off to a great start and will grow to bloom in the late summer & fall.



(CONT FROM PAGE 3)

Have you ever seen a Sphinx moth? They are also known as hummingbird moths. They are about the same size and colors of hummingbirds and their movements are also quite similar. This is a photo of one visiting some Verbena near the greenhouse. In another stage of their metamorphosis, they are the much dreaded tomato horn-

worm! Can you see it?

Last year we were fortunate enough to be visited by many frogs. Although small, I was glad to see them for I know they help reduce to pest population. The same goes for lizards. It is not uncommon to find a very small lizard in the middle of a dahlia, stalking some pest for a snack.

By growing dahlias I have been treated to a plethora of side attractions. I've learned to stop and observe; to learn about new creatures and to understand just a little better how the big and the small can live together. Why not allow yourself some time "...to stand and stare..."

Bk 3/1/07

AMERICAN DAHLIA SOCIETY SPRING MEETING

The DS of Georgia is hosting the Spring meeting of the Executive Committee of the American Dahlia Society at the Airport Crowne Plaza Hotel on April 13-15. It should be a very interesting meeting as many projects and issues are "in the mill". Members of our Southern Societies may attend the meeting but available space may be an issue so check with Brian Killingsworth before coming. Below is the February email from Dr. Peters the ADS representative on the ADS Board.

Hi All,

This is letter #4 from the American Dahlia Society. We have some really good news to share with all of you. The American Dahlia Society has printed a beautiful poster (or some call it a Wall Chart) all in color. It has several areas of interest to you dahlia growers. One area has pictures of 8 or 10 steps in growing dahlias successfully. The pictures are very distinct and show very well how we can top or disbud the dahlia plant, set the tuber in the ground, etc. You will just love it. There is also an area where our commercial dahlia growers have their advertising, so it would be easy for you to describe where a grower might go to purchase some dahlias. So, the ADS is asking that you simply order either 25 or 100 of them and simply pay the postage. The posters will have no extra charge. So, what you will want to do is send \$6.10 for 25 posters or \$8.10 for 100 posters to: **Steve Nowotarski at 200 Violet Street, Massapequa Park, NY 11762. (The, DS of GA, is planning to have these available at our tuber sales in April & May)** The posters will be an outstanding item to get into the hands of people who are fairly new to growing dahlias. I'm thinking that your Tuber and Plant sales and your Annual Dahlia Show would be ideal. Your new members will also want them. You may want

them too, as I am sure you know of a few growers that you would like to give to them to—they might even want to join you in the club.

This idea came from Steve Nowotarski and additional ideas came from several others. The whole point is that the ADS wants to continue to do things that will help the local dahlia societies. We need to make life easier for you and give you the tools to help you do your job.

The next item is a little invitation to you to join the Executive Committee of the ADS at their Annual Two-Day meeting. Yes, these meetings are open to all members of the ADS, and we love to have input from as many of you as possible.

This year the meeting will be in Atlanta and is being hosted by the Southern Conference, especially the Georgia Dahlia Society. It will commence around 6 pm on Friday evening, April 13th and finish up around noon on Sunday, April 15th. It will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel adjacent to the airport. The room rate is \$89 per night (but mention the Dahlia Society of Georgia when making the reservations) until 22 March. Their phone is: 866-750-3365

Now, I understand that most of you will not be able to make it, but you never know who might want to have a little extended weekend in a fine southern city. We would love to have "Ya-all" come and join us. Now, if you can't make it, we would love to have your ideas on what we should be working on. A few of you have already given me some wonderful ideas, and I would like a few more. Just give me a phone call (213-798-2915 EST) or fire back an email.

Thanks much,

Doc

