



DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

JESSICA , BB-C-FL, 2007
SOUTHERN STATES
FLOWER OF THE YEAR

Volume 5, Issue 6 June 2007

DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.ORG

ST MT DISPLAY GARDEN PLANTED

A great time was had by all! Nine DS of GA members gathered at the new Stone Mountain Display Garden on Saturday morning the 19th of May with our tools, three tillers, a lot of dahlia tubers and plants, and a lot of spirit of anticipation as we went to work and developed the garden. The weather was great with a morning low in the 50's so it was very comfortable. We tilled, went and secured

another tiller as the Troy Horse we brought decided not to work that day. Thanks to Larry Blummer and Kathy Keyes as we were able to go to their home, which was close by, and load up their Troy Horse and save the day. Thanks to Gene Hutchison for using his truck to get it there. By noontime we had 120 dahlias planted and (cont next page)



JUNE MEETING
MONDAY, JUNE 18TH
7:30 PM

GARDEN WORKSHOP
(BASEMENT CLASSROOM)

ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

The June meeting is always very interesting as we are in the growing cycle of our dahlias and some mem

bers already have a few blooms so **SUMMER CARE** is a very important aspect of caring for our plants. Also, if you are looking for some more plants this is the time as grower overstocks will be available for **FREE**. So come early and browse those overstocks to see if you can find some your looking for to put in your garden.

1. **THE TENNESSEE DAHLIA SHOW LOCATION HAS CHANGED**
2. **DS OF GA IS PLANNING A JULY MEETING AT THE REGULAR TIME. NOT FINAL YET**

2007

ANNUAL CALENDAR

- **JUNE MEETING, JUNE 18 ABG**
- **JULY MEETING, JULY 16, ABG**
- **PICNIC, CREEKSIDE DAHLIA FARM, ELLIJAY, GA, 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. East Brainard Church of Christ Gym, Chattanooga, TN**
- **GEORGIA DAHLIA SHOW SEPT 29/30 ABG, ATLANTA, GA**
- **ALABAMA DAHLIA SHOW OCT. 6, MCSWAIN SCIENCE CTR, BIRMINGHAM. AL**
- **GA NAT'L FAIR DAHLIA SHOW OCT 10-12, PERRY. GA**
- **MINI-SHOW OCTOBER 15, ABG**
- **NOVEMBER MEETING NOVEMBER NOV 19, ABG**
- **DECEMBER CHRISTMAS PARTY**

JUNE- GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

Do not panic, for surely rain will eventually come; but the 2007 season has started right in the middle of a drought, and that is not good for dahlias. Before starting to cover a normal June dahlia garden chore list, let's talk about dahlias and a drought.

If you had planted tubers then you're in better shape than those of us who planted propagated plants. For tubers, the storage of water and food in the tuber can delay the effects of drought. Eventually they too may suffer if the drought goes on too long. One of the reasons for using plants was to know immediately, the condition of the plants.

Unfortunately, conditions like bone dry gardens and sunny days with highs near 90 degrees quickly stress the plants. The plants appear wilted because they are; some show burned leaves; and some quickly give in to any pathogen lying in wait in the soil as well as spider mites. Drought conditions call for the gardener to be ever on the lookout for disaster and with watering restrictions in effect you need to follow the rules but water whenever possible. Water deeply those that show signs of wilt. You may want to speed up the application of mulch to help the soil maintain moisture and cool the surrounding soil.

Early morning watering is better than midday and, both are better than late evening because of the threat of mildew, which is encouraged by late watering, followed by the dark of night.

At this point, having backup plants are a good insurance policy because we will all lose some dahlias to the drought and gaps in the garden are as pleasing as uniform planting. Besides, lost plants mean lost flowers. Perhaps had I shaded my plants, as advised in a prior newsletter, I would not have so many to replace later. "Practice what you preach" sounds like good advise; particularly when heeded.

(Now having dealt with the drought, let's collect our thoughts and move on to when the rains return, because, they will.)

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. In a normal summer, you can usually **count on a dahlia plant to gain a pair of leaves a week.**

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.

**DENNIS HAVIG
ACWORTH, GEORGIA**

**JORGE MARTINEZ
DECATUR, GEORGIA**

**CAROL PENN
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

(CONT FROM P-1) watered in. We all had a great time with this project and it was a lot of fun. Thanks to each member that joined the fun, Roaslie Tripp, Don & Barbara Bloodworth, Jack Hellriegel, Larry Blumer & Kathy Keyes, Gene Hutchison, Brian Killingsworth, and John Kreiner. A special thanks to Jerry Vrzal, the Plantation Garden Coordinator, for all of his help in getting us started with this dahlia garden.

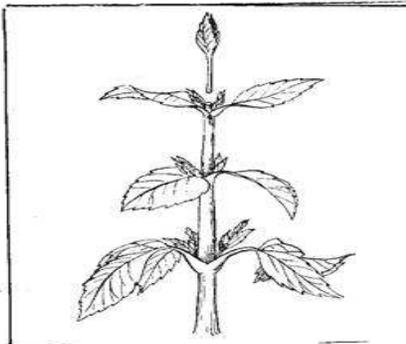


SPRING FLAG B-SC-DB Y/DP

DAHLIA QUESTIONS

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". Bailing 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 2 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 off-setting (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 leaf 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. **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.

Q: The watering restrictions for Atlanta and so far a few other counties in Georgia have limited our watering to one day a week. How do I keep my dahlias watered?

A: Mulch your dahlias very heavy with some product that will let the water through but will retain moisture. One thought is to mulch with black plastic and then put additional mulch on top of the plastic. You will need to either run a soaker hose under the plastic that can be used to water or peel back the plastic and water each watering day. This solution will keep any real rain water from getting to the plants except at the hole where the plant comes through the plastic. Also, pray for rain.

Q: My plant was about 3' high and it wilted & died. What caused this to happen?

A: The tuber rotted? Fungus attacked the plant? A stem borer or other insect attacked the plant? Take your pick! Sometimes growing dahlias just wilt and die. As Brian points out this month, make sure you have some replacement plants available.

Q: When should I mulch and what should I use?

A: This growing season the heat in the Southeast has been brutal so mulching is very appropriate at any time. I like to use the 1st of July as the date to have my leaves down I use to mulch with. You can use most anything that will allow the water through.

(CONT FROM P-3)

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.

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 your 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 can be dangerous to pets.

Small webs covering coppery colored, lower leaves that curl, dry up and turn yellow are often times a sign of **spider mite** (right) damage, particularly in hot and dry weather. A suspected leaf can be



Slugs love lettuce and other tender greens.



Telltale yellowing and webs are easier to see.



CHILSON'S PRIDE BB-ID-LB WH/PK



JUST PEACHY BB-SC-LB PK/Y



BEN HUSTON AA-ID-OR



VERA'S ELMA A-FD-L

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 sure 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. Check the tops of your plants in early morning or late evening. You'll find them gathered, as if having coffee. I just squish the whole group with my fingers. J



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.



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.

**** 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.

ANNUAL PICNIC

Last year our annual picnic at Dunaway Gardens was a big hit and everyone had a great time with lots to see. The DS of Georgia picnic this year will be held on Saturday, August 4th, 2-5 PM at the



home of Brian & Linda Killingsworth in Ellijay, GA. Their address is 3447 Whitepath Road, telephone # 706-276-1405. Whitepath Road is located about 4-5 miles North of Ellijay off of GA 515 the four lane Mountain Empire Parkway. **A map will be included with the July newsletter.** Don't miss this chance to visit with your dahlia friends and see over 1,000 dahlia plants growing in the Killingsworth's garden. Please bring a covered dish of your favorite vegetable, salad or dessert. Meat & drinks will be furnished by the Society. All members, prospective members, been thinking about becoming a member, are invited as are members from the other **Southern Dahlia Societies, Alabama, Tennessee and Carolinas.**



LARRY BLUMER SAVING THE DAY WITH HIS TILLER AND KATHY KEYES HELPING.



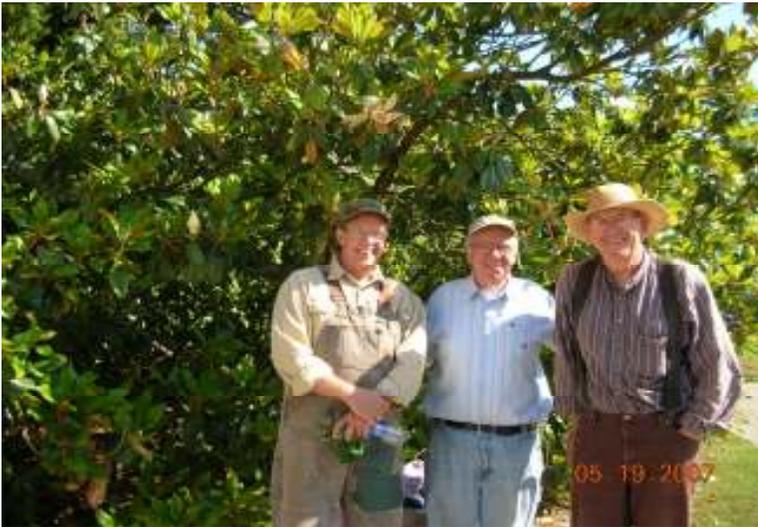
ROSALIE TRIPP, BRIAN KILLINGSWORTH, DON BLOODWORTH & JOHN



KATHY KEYES, JACK HELLRIEGEL, JOHN KREINER, BRIAN KILLINGSWORTH, AND ROSALIE TRIPP



BARBARA BLOODWORTH, MRS. VRZAL, AND TWO PLANTATION HOSTESSES IN PERIOD DRESS



BRIAN KILLINGSWORTH, DON BLOODWORTH & JERRY VRZAL, GARDEN COORDINATOR AT THE PLANTATION, STONE MOUNTAIN PARK



THE GARDEN IS PLANTED AND READY FOR STAKING. THE STAKES WERE NOT AVAILABLE AT PLANTING TIME.