



DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

Jessica BB-IC-BI Y/R

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Flower Of The Year

DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.ORG

ANOTHER HOT SUMMER

August is half over already and the heat is just about more than we can take. The annual picnic was a great time last Saturday and many thanks to Linda & Brian Killingsworth for hosting it at their home as we all had a great time and the most people in attendance than any I have attended, and now we are in the home stretch of the development of our plants just waiting for the cooler

temps to arrive and those pristine dahlia blooms. With this hot weather we must give our plants more attention with water and TLC even if it is too hot to go outside. THEY are hot too and need water to survive. Tying the plants is another must so growers don't give up yet; keep them growing and get them ready for fall.



SPARTACUS, A- ID - DR, GROWING IN THE 2007 GARDEN OF JOHN & GALE GEURIN IN CARTERSVILLE, GEORGIA. I ASKED JOHN HOW HE WAS ABLE TO HAVE SUCH LOVELY BLOOMS SO EARLY IN THE SEASON AND HE SAID HE DIDN'T DIG THESE PLANTS LAST YEAR..

AUGUST MEETING

MONDAY, AUGUST 20TH

7:30 PM

BASEMENT CLASSROOM

ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

This months program is a must for all growers and those planning or considering entering some of your blooms into the annual show or in the mini show in October. We will

have a late season tune-up on how to keep those blooms coming, how to stiffen the stems to hold the blooms up, what to do about fertilization after September 1st and how to take seeds for seedlings next year. We will discuss transporting your flowers, what items you need for staging at the shows and how to stage your blooms. This program will be very helpful for new members and more experienced growers alike.

2007

ANNUAL CALENDAR

- AUGUST MEETING, AUG 20, ABG
- JUDGING SEMINAR, AUG 25, HOME OF DAN & PAULA PINHOLSTER, 73 BLACK-FOOT TRAIL, CARTERSVILLE, GA
- 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 ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN, 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, NOV 19, ABG
- DEC CHRISTMAS PARTY

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 daytime 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 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 midday 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 at the left there are 4 buds: the central (main) bud, a small bud very close to the central bud, and two

DAHLIA QUESTIONS

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. 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 on previous page) 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 considered 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 photo on the right 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 2 weeks. You could probably cut a fully mature bloom in 10 – 14 days. Notice at the 2nd and 3rd 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

Q: I am having trouble getting my dahlias to bud and bloom. What should I do to get them to bloom?

A: There are a couple of products that work well on dahlias that can be used when buds appear and can be used every week or two through the blooming season. The first is an Alaska product called MOR-BLOOM. It is a 0-10-10 fish based product that is excellent. The second product is MAXSEA and is a 3-20-20

Q: What is another method for stiffening stems besides using potassium nitrate? A: Spray Mor-Bloom on your pants weekly.

Q: What about the use of nitrogen after September 1st? I have heard different things about fertilizing then. A: After September 1st stop using nitrogen on your plants unless we don't have any rain. Then you can use a low nitrogen product like MAXSEA or a 5-10-10 or MOR-BLOOM. Too much nitrogen in the fall will cause the blooms to be spindly, the tubers to rot during the winter, and will kill the eyes on the tuber for the next season.

Q: A: Q: Since it has been so hot my plants have just stopped growing.? What do I do????? A: The heat has been very tough this month so to get them going again make sure you fertilize weekly at half the recommended strength. Water at least two times a week. Disbranch lower laterals for vertical growth.

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 re-hydrate. 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 3rd 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. 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.

A CURRENT REPORT

This past Saturday many of you ventured up to Ellijay for the society's annual picnic. You saw in my field, first hand evidence of a poor season. There were gaps throughout the rows of immature plants where we'd suffered repeated losses. Today I received a report from UGA concerning the sample of rootless dahlia plants and soil I had submitted for analysis. They diagnosed the culprit as *Rhizoctonia* stem rot, a soil borne fungus.

They listed several chemicals to use in combating this invader; but more importantly, suggested growing conditions that I must address in order to improve future "crops". To offset the residing fungus they recommend incorporating large quantities of organic material to improve tilth and drainage; go back to growing winter cover crops. Furthermore, they suggested the high loss rate could be attributed to my having grown the same crop in the same location for numerous years. I have provided an incubator for the fungus. Obviously 14 years long enough. In other words, I need to rotate crops and perhaps let some beds lay fallow for a season or more. This "farming" is a risky and humbling business. BK



EASTERN TRIAL GARDEN 2006



EASTERN TRIAL GARDEN 2006



DR. JOHN KAISER B-ID-FL



2006 NATIONAL SHOW IN
LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK

ANNUAL JUDGING SEMINAR

The DS of Georgia annual judging seminar will be held once again in the home of Dan & Paula Pinholster in Cartersville, GA on August 25, at 10:00 AM till 3:00 PM. Lunch will be served. Members from Alabama, Carolinas and Tennessee Societies are welcomed to attend. Please RSVP to Paula at the August meeting or call in your reservation to 770-382-8110, or email dfp@juno.com

The seminar will be taught by our own Gene Boeke, the ADS Southern Regional Vice-President. Gene will familiarize us with the various techniques of judging dahlias on the show bench and how to scorecard new dahlias. His judging seminars are always informative and interesting and so valuable in reminding current judges and explaining to new apprentice judges the finer points of judging. New members are welcomed as you can work as apprentice judges during our annual show in September which is a lot of fun and the best way to use the techniques learned at the seminar. If you are not sure if you have an interest in learning how to judge, come and learn and also see the lovely garden of Dan & Paula. They grow a lot more than dahlias that you will enjoy seeing plus they always have a number of dahlias blooming. With the new trial garden in Cashiers, NC the importance of scorecarding new dahlias for release has become very important again. The Carolinas Society has invited all judges to come to Cashiers to scorecard the trial garden in September.

PICNIC RECIPES

Members please send those wonderful recipes from the food you brought to the picnic and Janice Tsurutis will compile them and publish them to all of the members. The food was OUTSTANDING and I am sure many members would like the recipes.

Her address is 3929 Menlo Drive, Doraville, GA 30340-5117 or email tsurutis@aol.com



Bodacious AA-ID-R (previous column) John Geurin's patch.

2007 PICNIC PICTURES



GREAT SMOKEY MOUNTAIN

DAHLIA TRIAL GARDEN

This past Saturday Gene Boeke, Brian Killingsworth, John Kreiner and John Mell attended the Carolinas Dahlia Society Annual Judging Seminar which was conducted by Gene and Brian. The seminar was held in an outdoor pavilion on the grounds at the new trial garden in Cashiers, NC. The temperature was in the mid 80's and very comfortable. We would like to thank the Carolinas Society for their hospitality and excellent lunch provided.

After the seminar we score carded several of the seedlings in the trial garden. Since this is the first year of it's existence the garden has a provisional status for two years from the American Dahlia Society before the scores count with the other trial gardens.

We would like to congratulate the Carolinas Dahlia Society and in particular Buddy Dean, Katie Lombard, and Allen Haas for such an outstanding presentation of the trial garden in such a lovely setting. I highly recommend to everyone if you are traveling to the Highland/Cashiers area to stop and see this beautiful trial garden. Email or call if you would like directions.



GREAT SMOKEY MOUNTAIN DAHLIA TRIAL GARDEN



ALPEN LINDSEY M-SC-P



HILLTOP KELLY BB-SC-LB PK/Y



SEEDLING IN THE TRIAL GARDEN