



# DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

Jessica BB-IC-BI Y/R

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November/December, 2007

Flower Of The Year

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

## NATIONAL FAIR DAHLIA SHOW FUN

We finally had a dahlia show in the South this season. With all of the regular Southern States shows being canceled this year due to the dry and hot growing conditions it was good to have this show in the middle of October in Perry, GA. It was like a SS show in that we had growers from Alabama, Tennessee, and North Carolina bring blooms and participate along with our Georgia growers.

Most everyone gathered for dinner on Tuesday evening in Henderson Village South of Perry and enjoyed a wonderful meal. Wednesday morning was staging time and then judging teams were assigned and went to work. There were some very nice blooms despite the growing conditions this season. A catered lunch was provided by the Fair and the (cont P2)



Some of the show tables at the 2007 National Fair Dahlia Show in Perry, GA

L to R Pat Phillips, from the Tennessee Dahlia Society and Allen Haas from the Carolinas Dahlia Society. Photos are by Millie Ehrett, Alabama Dahlia Society.

**NOVEMBER MEETING**

**NOVEMBER 19TH**

**7:30 PM**

**BASEMENT CLASSROOM**

**ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN**

November is the time we dig out tubers and some growers divide and store them inside for the winter. We will demonstrate how to divide tubers and then talk about

Methods of storage both leaving them in the ground and inside. This is always one of the most popular meetings of the year and a very informative presentation that all growers can use in their dahlia care. Come to our November meeting and sharpen up your skills for dividing those tubers either now or in the Spring.

2007

### ANNUAL CALENDAR

- NOVEMBER MEETING, NOV 19, ABG
- CHRISTMAS PARTY  
DECEMBER 9, 1-5 PM  
ASHWOOD CONDOMINIUMS CLUBHOUSE  
3227 HENDERSON MILL ROAD  
ATLANTA GA 30341  
(SAME LOCATION AS LAST YEAR)

## MAIN ENTRANCE TO ABG CLOSSES

Due to the construction of the new parking garage the main entrance has been closed and an old service entrance has been activated as the entry point into the garden. This entrance is still on Piedmont Road just a little further towards 14th street and should be very well marked. The entrance comes out near the ORCHID CENTER.

## ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our annual Christmas party will be held on Sunday, December 9th, 1-5 PM at the Ashwood Condominiums Associates, Clubhouse 3460 Ashwood Lane off of Henderson Mill Road in Tucker, GA. This is the same location where we held our Christmas party last year. A map will be sent in a follow on email.

We are asking everyone to bring a veggie, salad, or dessert that everyone can enjoy. In addition, we always have fun with a gift exchange so if you are coming please bring a gardening or other gift no more than \$10 in value for someone of your same gender. Men bring a gift for a man and ladies bring one for a lady.

## 2008 DAHLIA CALENDARS

2008 Dahlia Calendars are now available to order from our vendor or we will have them for sale at the November meeting and Christmas party. The cost will be \$12 per calendar plus \$1 for the shipping. They are very well done and they make great Christmas presents for your family and friends.



JESSICA BB-C-FLAME, SS FLOWER OF THE YEAR

Continued from page 1

Semi-annual Southern States meeting was held. The main business was discussion about preparing for the 2010 National Dahlia Show to be held in Chattanooga. A lot of work will be required by all of the Southern States Societies in order to put this show together so please consider volunteering/helping on one of the committees when they are formed. While it will be a lot of work it will also be a wonderful time hosting this great event.



L to R: Ray Phillips, Ed Whitfield, Brenda McIntyre, Allen Haas



ARRANGEMENT BY BRENDA MCINTYRE



Harriet Comer from Macon and Brian Killingsworth staging blooms

## DIGGING & STORING OF DAHLIA TUBERS- A good project for Nov./Dec.

There are two schools of thought about digging and storing dahlias.

In our climate we can take the easier approach and simply mulch the still buried roots with about 6" of pine straw or leaves or any other lofty mulch that should ward off any deep freezing of the ground. After several years you will have to dig them in order to split the large mass that has developed-just like you do with daylilies and Shasta daisies.

Those who dig and store every year do not want to take the risk of losing their tubers and more so, want to separate the clumps of highly desirable tuber to insure having more plants of their favor varieties in the future. The following article details one approach for those in 2) above. (Photos are from the Colorado Dahlia Society.)

Although your dahlia plants are still alive, surly by this time next month a frost will have ended their 2007 growth. With the holidays just around the corner now is a good time for us to plan to dig and store our crop of tubers. Once frost does kill the tops of your plants I recommend that you cut off and remove all plant material to within about 8" to 12" of the ground. (You do not have to wait. The plants have been in the ground long enough and your tubers should be mature enough to dig and store.)



This remaining stalk will act as a handle. If you've not had a rain within the last 7 to 10 days it is a good idea to water the dahlias (try not to let water get into the open top of the stalks). Considering what 2007 was like, that last sentence ought to get a laugh. Once watered, wait about a week to generate eye growth on the tubers and then dig. (We should skip this step if water restrictions are enforced

where you grow. Besides, plump tubers indicate sufficient water for storage.)

Place the shovel blade or garden fork prongs about a foot from the center of the stalk and gently pry up the mass from all 4 sides. GENTLY!! Dahlias are most tender now and the slender necks of the tubers can and will easily break. Do not be in a hurry and try to lift from just one side. You will lose the best tubers with the most roots because they have successfully grown far out into the



surrounding soil. Look at this operation as gathering a root crop and you're trying to maximize the number of tubers collected.



At this time you can wash off the soil and mark the name of the variety on the clump of tubers by using an indelible pencil or by securing a tag to the old central stalk. Leave the washed

clumps out to air dry for several hours but not in direct sun. Invert the clump during this time so any water trapped in the old stalk will drain. Be careful when handling the tubers, not only because of the tender necks but also because the skin of these newly dug tubers is especially tender at this time and the tubers need to be cured before storing. Also, concentrate on keeping the right name with the right clump. Murphy's Law rules often apply during this operation.

**What is curing?** I understand it to be a slow drying process of the tubers so that the skin will thicken and toughen. By accomplishing this curing the tubers should store well during the winter because the thick and tough skin will prevent any moisture from escaping from the tubers. When tubers lose moisture they shrivel and will not be viable at spring planting time.

Now is when you must decide if you will only cut the clump into halves or quarters or whether you will try to claim as many tubers as possible. This decision is usually tied to how many plants you want to grow next year and whether or not this particular variety is a favorite of yours.

Having dug, washed, dried and decided the number to store, study the clump closely. The old stalk "flows" into the new tubers over a slender neck. The eyes for next year's growth form where the old stalk (mother plant) connects to the often time slender necks. In this photo the eyes are the white, circular objects. One eye is protruding in the upper right corner of the photo.



I use sharp garden shears but have also used knives of all sizes and shapes and razorblade holders like box cutters. Sharp is important and equally important is safety. Think where your other hand is before you cut. Blades can and do slip so be forewarned. If you have a lot of clumps to cut then you might

want to invest in a filleting glove found in any fishing supply store.

**Warning- A word about spreading diseases when dividing tubers.** It is believed that a multitude of virus that can infect dahlias can be passed on by contaminated blades. I've used a flame or bleach dip to clean blades between clumps.

**Rule of thumb** – Every tuber or partial clump must have an eye in order to grow next season. Eyes are most visible in the fall and right after digging and washing. If dug but not



cut up at that time, the eyes will sink back into the necks and often become invisible until the clumps awaken in spring.

Using a sterilized and sharp blade, locate tubers with solid necks that connect to the older stalk material ("mother plant"). Carefully cut these away from the clump and trim off any rotted area and stringy roots.



Marking tubers correctly is very important. If the tuber is dry, use a permanent ink Sharpie. If the tubers are still

damp, use an indelible Noblot Ink Pencil. These special pencils are available from commercial dahlia dealers or perhaps the society. A word about tuber rot while in storage is



needed. Try to cut off all of the old stalk before storing. It is often the source from which rot will spread. Another location for rot is in the very

center of the tuber. The latter is hard to find and often goes undetected until spring when you find that the rot has advanced throughout the tuber and turn this one time promise into useless mush.

A step I've used to guard about this internal rot is to soak cut tubers in a solution of fungicide before allowing for an over night drying. In particular I use Banrot, a product from Scott at a mixture of 1TBS per gallon of water. The tubers are submerged for about 10 minutes then laid out to re-dry.



Other products to use are Consan or Cleery 3336. The final step is to put the tubers in a storage medium for their winter hibernation. I have used perlite, vermiculite and wood shaving. ( Sprinkle a little bit of sulfur in the bag,

too.) All have good and bad points so it is up to you. Perlite and wood shavings make for "pretty" tubers that stay plump. But they also seem to pass rot from one tuber to the next even if they don't touch. Vermiculite, the courser the better, do not pass on rot but seem to allow some shriveling and can be dangerous to work with in enclosed areas. The same inhalation danger applies to perlite. As I said, it's up to you.

Finally I place the tuber and storing medium in a zip lock bag that I leave open during storage to allow the ebb and flow of moisture. Also write the name of the variety on the outside of the bag. There are bags on the market that have holes in them, allowing the tubers to breath. The filled bags are stored in the dark and cool as possible but not freezing. I check several bags during the winter to see if all is well. Then it's time to rest -----us and the tubers.

### BK



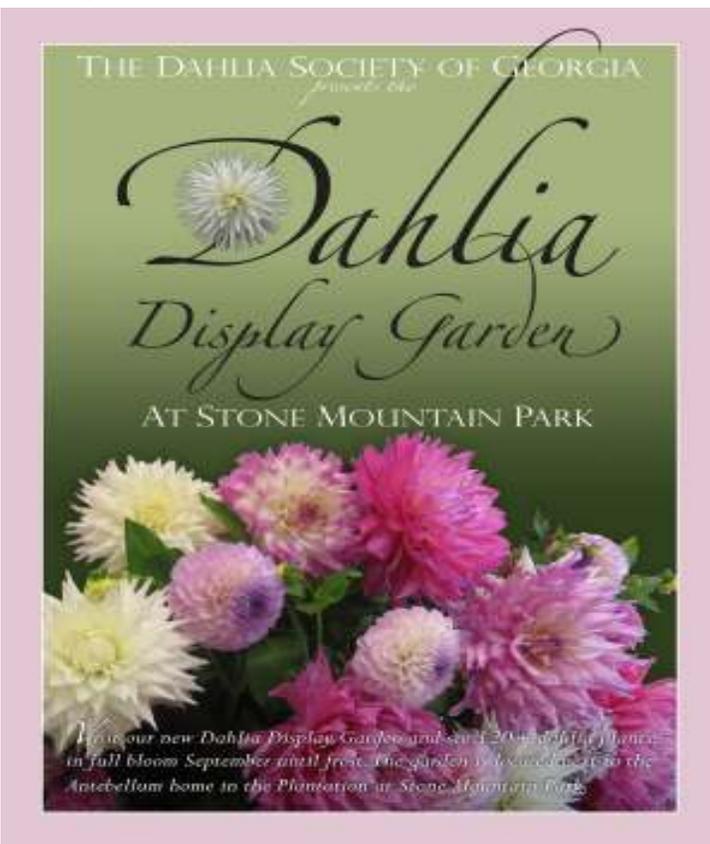
**IN MEMORIAM:** Nick Gitts of SWAN ISLAND DAHLIAS succumbed to colon cancer on October 16th. Nick and Marge turned 80 acres of bottom land near Canby. Oregon into the Swan Island famous display of dahlias. Nick and Marge participated in the Portland, OR dahlia Society with dirt, flowers, tubers, meeting space, money, lemonade and most importantly with expertise and enthusiasm. Nick's colorful catalog becomes a coffee table display each year.

Taken from the Dahlia Society of California November Newsletter.

## 2008 DUES

Since this newsletter covers December also there won't be another time to bring this subject up before the January newsletter. The ADS is requesting that the DUES payment be as close to the new year as possible in order to save money in publishing the March Bulletin in the second quarter. Payment can be received anytime from now on for 2008.

I know it has been a tough growing year for all of us with the heat and the lack of rain but things will get better next year so be brave and continue your membership into 2008.



## STONE MOUNTAIN DISPLAY GARDEN

The first year of our display garden at Stone Mountain has been very successful even with adverse growing conditions that we have suffered through. Many visitors to the Stone Mountain Plantation have enjoyed, photographed, admired and commented on the beauty of the dahlias. We want to thank all of the employees of the Plantation, and in particular Jerry Vrzal, for their help and interest in the display garden as it has progressed during this first year. They have provided a watchful eye in making sure things were going well and alerting us to any issues that needed attention. **Thanks very much.**

We would also like to thank all of those that have helped in the garden this year. We had a big crew that helped getting it planted and others that have helped almost on a weekly basis, Barbara Bloodworth and Gene Hutchison. We will be digging the tubers pretty soon, on a Saturday of course, so anyone who would like to help or if you would like to come out and just observe the process please let me know so you can be notified. We must have all vehicles out of the garden location by 10:00 AM so we will need to start early so make provisions for the cold weather.



PINK PET ST-P, A VERY EASY TO GROW DAHLIA IN THE SOUTH. LOTS OF BLOOMS ALL SUMMER



TARATAHI LILAC BB-IC-LB LV/WH 2007 NAT'L SHOW



INLAND DYNASTY AA-SC-Y 2007 NAT'L SHOW

