



# DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

BO-BAY B-SC- LB Y/L

Volume 6, Issue 5

May, 2008

FLOWER OF THE YR

WWW.DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.ORG

## MAY- DAHLIA PLANTING BEGINS

May is usually the first month to plant dahlia tubers or plants in the Atlanta and northern Georgia areas. Usually I recommend mid May as the start point because of the threat of late frost or at least cool soil temperatures. However, we again had a mild winter and this spring has been quite pleasant. The soil in my garden reached the desired 70 degrees. The winter rains have been slightly below average so our garden soil can be worked with little concern of compacting. At the same



KARMA\_SANGRIA A LOVELY FLOWER FROM A NEW FAMILY OF GARDEN DAHLIAS THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY FOR CUTTING. MORE.:[www.newfarm.org/columns/cut\\_flowers/2004/1104/dahlia.shtml](http://www.newfarm.org/columns/cut_flowers/2004/1104/dahlia.shtml)

time the cool temperatures at night have been great for hardening off any plants or potted tubers. If you've done your homework then you know that your bed should have already been prepared in a sunny location that will get **AT LEAST ½ DAY OF SUN**. It will not be in the lowest spot of the garden but instead, it should be where good drainage exists or where you've already considered that and have provided for good drainage in some manner. **DAHLIAS DO NOT LIKE WET FEET! (CONT P 2)**

**MEMBERS—Bring your tubers!** We have a need for as many tubers as we can get so if you have divided tubers at home or will divide them before the meeting please bring them to the auction as we may have less than normal this year due to the drought last summer and other adverse growing issues that were experienced. All tubers must meet the following conditions:

1. Listed in the ADS Classification book.

(cont on next page)

### MAY MEETING

MAY 19TH, 7:30 PM

TUBER SALE/AUCTION

SOMEONE WILL BE THERE TO DIRECT YOU TO THE AUCTION

ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

BRING YOUR TUBERS

### 2008 CALENDAR

#### MAY-SEPTEMBER

##### MAY

MAY 19TH- TUBER SALE ABG

##### JUNE

JUNE 16- MEETING ABG

##### JULY

ANNUAL PICNIC TBA

##### AUGUST

AUGUST 18—MEETING ABG

##### SEPTEMBER

CAROLINAS DAHLIA SHOW, SEPT 13-14

UNC ARBOREUM

NAT'L DAHLIA SHOW

SEPT 18-22

LONGWOOD GARDENS

PHILADELPHIA, PA

GEORGIA DAHLIA SHOW

SEPT 27-28, ABG

Once summer sets in, dahlias will grow extremely quickly and many can reach a height of between 3' and 7'. You will need to provide some support system in order to keep the growth off of the ground. You can use anything as simple as a wooden or metal (rebar) stake or even a more elaborate device such as a tomato cage. **SET YOUR STAKING SYSTEM BEFORE YOU PLANT THE DAHLIAS!** Stakes have been known to find and destroy planted dahlias. I speak from personal experience.

If you have already **IMPROVED THE SOIL IN YOUR PLANTING AREA WITH ANY NUMBER OF ENRICHING ORGANIC MATTER** then plant the dahlias in a hole about 3"- 4" deep. If you are planting tubers directly in the hole you do not need to add fertilizer at this time because the tuber supplies any needed food and most moisture. Gently refill the soil over the tuber while avoiding disturbing any young eyes or sprouts that have appeared on the tuber. I recommend only partially fill the hole initially, adding soil gradually as the plant begins to grow. If any eye or sprout has been knocked off, they will regenerate themselves quickly and continue to grow. In fact I will eliminate all but one or two eyes before planting tubers so the remaining eye(s) will get full advantage of food and water. You do not need to water planted tubers at this time. The same method goes for any tubers you may have previously potted in order to begin the "awakening process". Gently tap the root /tuber mass out of the pot and place in the bottom of the hole. It is fine if any sprouts protrude above the top of the hole because that will provide you with an indication of the dahlia's health. You should water in this root/tuber mass to help it get off to a quick start. A handful of slow release fertilizer at planting time, left on the surface, is a good step at this time.

I often plant the started tubers and root ball deeper than a tuber with only an eye showing. Dahlias have a lot of similar characteristics as tomato plants. You may want to plant a started tuber with a 10" shot at a depth of 6" - 8", leaving only the top pair of leaves and growth tip; tomatoes like to be planted deeply, too. By doing this you will help the plant establish an early, strong system of roots. Why? Because where each leaf meets the stalk, dahlias have the ability to produce roots or laterals. When placed under the ground it will produce more roots. Those junctions of leaves above the ground will make branches (laterals). Roots help feed and collect water for the overall plant and the more roots, the healthier and more productive will be your dahlias. If you have created or acquired any dahlia plants then a small handful or less of fertilizer can be

## NEW MEMBERS

THE DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA IS  
VERY PLEASED TO WELCOME THE  
FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS.

**HEATHER & MADDY VARSALONA**  
**KENNESAW, GA**

THANK YOU FOR JOINING THE DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AT OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS AND OTHER FUNCTIONS.

### CONT FROM PAGE 1

2. Each tuber must have a visible eye or growing tip, or if the growing tip has been knocked off, the location of the eye circled with a MM/pen.
3. The name of the tuber must be written on the tuber with a MM or a label attached to the tuber. Please be as accurate as possible with the name.
4. Bring only those considered as heat tolerant dahlias as listed on our website, new releases, or those that grow well in your garden.
5. Do not bring any tubers that you would not grow again in your own garden because of poor performance.

Our goal is to make sure our members and those attending that are not members purchase quality tubers that will perform in our heat and are named accurately.

worked into the soil used to cover the base of the dahlia plant in the planting hole. Use a general, balanced fertilizer such as 8-8-8 or 12-12-12. As a precaution against burning by the midday sun of the new leaves, provide some type of cover over these plants for about 48 hours. You can use something as simple as a piece of wood or a cardboard box. Lean them or other items against the stake. This protection will allow the young plants to adjust to their new settings with the minimum of damage. Here again the plant will provide you with a visual indicator of its overall health.

At this time let me make two suggestions. Hold back several tubers or plants to replace any that fail to make it. At this month's auction buy several extra dahlias because as with any other flower, dahlias are subject to rot or other damage at various times throughout the growing season. Planting time is an "at risk" time until the dahlias acclimate to their new surroundings. Last spring we experienced a strong storm with high winds. The next morning I found that a tree had fallen on the dahlia garden and destroyed "several" dahlia plants. It was good that I had some substitutes.

Second, as an experiment, I challenge you to leave a plant or two or a started dahlia tuber or two in the pot. Any size pot will do. Plant the entire pot in the ground, covering to slightly over the top of the pot. Keep track of which ones are still in the pot. Experience has shown that there will be no discernable difference in the growth nor bloom production of these plants and, in the case your garden is visited by tuber eating voles ( photo on left), the pot will stop these eating machines from feasting on your dahlia tubers.

For the past several years we have grown all of our dahlias by leaving them in the pots and planting the pot directly in the ground. Our garden contained over 1000 dahlia plants. I believe we have had the very same number and quality of blooms and there are at least



three advantages over dahlias planted directly into the garden soil. First, you will avoid any damage from burrowing moles and voles. They can not chew through the pots. Second, if the particular variety of dahlia is a poor tuber maker, you will find that they do make tubers if planted while still in the pot. Third, in the fall when the plants die back, those left in pots are easily pulled from the ground and

are very easy to store. That way you can avoid all of the digging and mess associated with washing and storing clumps of tubers. If you chose not to dig and store, simply cover with 4" to 6" of mulch and the dahlias will survive winter and grow again next season.

One last warning- until your plant's stalk has grown to the width of a good sized pencil; you should inspect your newly immersing sprouts and plants daily, if possible. At this stage new tender growth is very inviting to cutworms (photo below). They come out at



night and you might find that new growth has been cut off at the surface. Your plant will look like it has been visited by a "tiny lumberjack".

If you find that a plant has been damaged or worse, search an inch or so down in the soil immediately around the damaged growth and you will probably find a fat, brown and round cutworm. Cutworms are hard to spot so take your time. Two stout rocks, used as cymbals, will take care of your lowly nemesis; ditto for an old pair of pliers. Some growers have been known to wrap aluminum foil around the lower couple of inches of new growth as a preventative cover. It works for dahlias and tomatoes; yet another similarity.

Now, all the waiting is over. Begin planting your dahlias, get your hands dirty and your back sore. Rejoice that your passion is gardening. BK



KARMA AMANDA

## DISPLAY GARDEN PLANTED FOR 2008



This past Saturday 14 members gathered at Stone Mountain Park to prepare the soil and plant the tubers that were brought. Our President, Frank McComb, came and helped out but had to leave early to catch a flight for a trip Turkey. Thanks Frank for coming and spending a couple of hours during such a busy time for you. Some of our new members came long distances to help out, with Dave & Brenda Ely coming from Marietta, Heather and Maddy Varsalona coming from Kennesaw and



Bob and Lori Goehring arriving from Woodstock on their motorcycles. Needless to say they only brought along small tools but we had plenty of tools for everyone. Gene Hutchison brought the soil amendments and the refreshments in his truck which we needed as it got pretty warm. Larry Blumer and Kathy Keyes supplied the tiller and lots of labor as did Carla Schissel, Jack Hellriegel, Dick Amundsen, Dave & Brenda, and Bob & Lori. We appreciate everyone coming out and helping this year. I had fun and I hope everyone else did too. THANK YOU SO MUCH. John



THIS IS GALLERY DAHLIA REMBRANDT WHICH ONLY GROWS TO A HEIGHT OF 16" OR LESS AS DO MOST OF THE GALLERY SERIES OF DAHLIAS. WE HAVE PLANTED FIVE DIFFERENT VARIETIES OF GALLERY DAHLIAS ON THE FRONT ROW OF THE STONE MOUNTAIN DISPLAY GARDEN. GOOGLE GALLERY