



FLOWER OF THE YEAR

## DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER & MEETING NOTICE AUGUST, 2015

### THE HOT, HOT SUMMER OF 2015

I heard a news report the other day that so far this year we have had 41 days with temperatures over 90 degrees in the Atlanta area. It is not that unusual to have hot summers in Georgia but it makes it difficult for dahlia growers to get decent blooms when it is so hot.

The last thing we did before starting our journey back to Atlanta from our picnic in Fort Valley this past Saturday, was to visit the home of Bill & Ann McGehee to see Bill's dahlia patch. The plants looked great and while he didn't have a lot of blooms the ones he had were mostly AA & A sized blooms and were just lovely without the tell-tale signs of heat damage from the sun and high temperatures. You could tell his plants had received a lot of attention this season as the leaves were a nice dark green without insect issues. All of his blooms were better than what I have had so far this season but I usually don't let a lot of blooms form until the middle of August.

The secret to Bill's lovely blooms was the use of drip irrigation and shade cloth over his patch. The shade cloth allows rain to come through but keeps the harsh rays of the sun from damaging the blooms. If you want to improve the quality of your blooms then consider the use of shade cloth and drip irrigation. The internet has lots of examples of how to construct a framework for shade cloth and how to install a drip irrigation system.

Their home was quite lovely and very unique with a garden room that contained an area with a small pond and a number of tropical plants. The room was glassed in and viewable from every room in the house.



**AUGUST MEETING:** AUGUST 17, 7:30 PM, ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN  
GEORGIA PACIFIC CLASSROOM IN THE ORCHID CENTER

**DIRECTIONS TO THE GP CLASSROOM:** Come through the garden and when you reach the grand lawn turn right and follow the sidewalk to the classroom entrance.

The August meeting will be our **MINI-SHOW** plus the informational instruction on how to prepare and stage your dahlias for the annual show. There will be lots of help available for first time showers.

The **MINI-SHOW** will have two classes:

Class one is for new growers, novice level growers or growers that have not won above the novice level in the annual show. Any form and size blooms can be entered. Ribbons and prizes will be awarded. Multiple entries can be made.

The second class will be for experienced growers. Three entries per grower of their best blooms without class distinction. First, second and third places will be awarded with bragging rights for the prizes.

We will also have a special presentation.

**PLEASE BRING YOUR BLOOMS**

## **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

**SARA SCHINDEL  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

**BARBARA SPARKES  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

**WE ARE SO GLAD YOU HAVE JOINED THE  
GEORGIA DAHLIA SOCIETY**

### **DAHLIA QUESTIONS**

**Q:** The lower leaves on my plant keep dying. What does that indicate?

**ANS:** Allen Haas told us at the June meeting the leaves dying indicated the plant needs additional fertilization. With our hot temperatures I feel that the heat also contributes to the leaves dying. The loss of the lower leaves will not have any effect on the overall health of the plant. Air can circulate better to the rest of the plant.

**Q:** My plants wilt during the heat of the day. What can I do to help these plants?

**ANS:** The best thing you can do is give them a “spritz” or quick shower with your hose or sprinkler. This will perk them up and help them to recover from the heat.

**Q:** I have noticed some powdery mildew on my plants. What can I do to control it?

**ANS:** There are a number of home remedies you can find on the internet for starters. Neem oil will combat it, however, I have never tried it. The best product I have found is a fungicide called Rubigan. Spray every two or three weeks and you will never see it. The main drawback is the cost. There is another product called Stylet oil that cures powdery mildew that costs \$30 per gal. Google Stylet Oil.

**Q: I am having a hard time getting blooms to set. What should I do?**

**ANS:** I would recommend you purchase a product called Mor-Bloom made by Alaska Products. I haven't seen it in the big box stores lately but you can order it on line. It is a fish based 0-10-10 and works great to get your plants blooming. You can also use it as a drench for **stiffening stems** to hold those blooms up straight. **Potassium Nitrate is another product for stiffening stems.** It is not very expensive but you have to purchase a fairly large bag to get it but some people sell smaller amounts on E-bay and Amazon. Get the water soluble product if you can.

**Q:** I am thinking about showing some blooms at the annual show this year, but the buds on my plants are facing straight up or down, with very few at a 45 degree angle. How do you get the 45 degree angle?

**ANS:** When the buds are about 1/3 to 1/2 their size before opening, spend some time in your garden “setting buds”. It must be when it is warm enough for the buds to be pliable. Gently move the bud to a 45 degree angle little by little until it reaches the angle and hold it for about two minutes. If it doesn't hold, then do it again and again until it holds the 45 degree angle.

**Q:** I think I have spider mites. How do I tell for sure and how do I get rid of them?

**ANS:** Look at the bottom leaves to see if they are brownish and drying up but not dead. If they are, take a sheet of white paper and hold under the leaves and shake the plant. Mites should fall on the paper and will be red in color. Treat with Organcide 3 in 1 or Neem oil. These products will suffocate the mites. Make sure you spray the undersides of the leaves all over the plant. Spray weekly to make sure they are gone. The alternative is Avid, a strong miticide and very expensive. It takes a series of three spraying three days apart to kill them in all stages of their life cycle.

**Q:** I have read and heard that you should reduce the amount of nitrogen in the fall. Is that correct? Why should I do that?

**ANS:** That is correct unless there is no rain. Rain water contains nitrogen and will keep your plants growing. The Fall is usually one of the driest times of the year. You want your plants to continue to grow but just at a slower rate than in the summer months. Too much nitrogen late in the growing season can cause your blooms to be spindly and your tubers to shrivel and not keep well during the winter.

## 2015 ANNUAL PICNIC

Thank you Bill & Ann McGehee for hosting such a grand picnic this year that will not soon be forgotten. We all had a great time and learned a great deal of history about peaches and your families lives over four generations in growing peaches. The food was great and the farm was a lovely setting to host our group. Oh yes, that peach ice cream was the best and the pound cake was super too. Thanks so much for all of the peaches. We look forward to seeing you again at the Perry show in October.



**BILL AND ANN MCGEHEE**



**STARTING OUT ON THE BUS**





**ANN AND HER SIGNATURE SALAD OF SPINICH, PECANS, A GREAT DRESSING AND OF COURSE SLICED FRESH PEACHES. IT WAS OUTSTANDING.**



**BILL GIVING US US A HISTORY LESSON  
ABOUT PEARSON PEACHES IN FORT VALLEY**

