

THE DAHLIA DIRT



The Newsletter of the Monterey Bay Dahlia Society

May 2012

Next Meeting:

Friday, May 11 at Simpkins Swim Center, Santa Cruz

7:00 Pot Luck Dinner

7:30 Meeting

Program:

We will have a variety of our members give expert advice on general dahlia care, pest management, growing dahlias in containers, labeling, transportation and showing .



From the Prez....

It's a wonderful time of the year in the garden; so full of potential and excitement of things to come. I hope everyone's gardens are coming along well. I have most of my tubers and plants in and can't wait to see how the new dahlias I planted will turn out. I'm keeping my eye on my new seedlings too!

At this Friday's meeting we are going to do something new. After introductions and brief society business, we will break into small groups of 5 to 10 people so everyone can get their dahlia questions answered. We will have experienced members leading each group and you will be able to attend break-out groups on the following topics:

1. General Dahlia Care.
2. Pest Management.
3. Container Planting.
4. Dahlia Labels, Dahlia Transportation Tubs, and Shows.

We will spend 30 minutes on your first topic and then will switch to your second choice. Hope to see you on Friday.



Happy planting...Kristine



Kristine and Iris were on hand to give experienced advice to an eager crowd at the “How to Grow Dahlias” demonstration held at Pro Build on River St. in Santa Cruz.



Lots of tubers and plants were sold!



We also sold tubers and plants at the Cabrillo Farmer’s Market on Saturday, April 14.

We had so much fun we forgot to take photos !

Tuber Planting in April



April was a busy month in the garden. The tubers emerge from their winter sleep sprouting and ready to go!



Dahlia Culture for May

Plant Protection

Sometimes we plant tubers with long, leafy sprouts, and/or tender plants that were started in pots. Such bits of greenery are immediately vulnerable. Don't delay spreading slug and snail bait. General-purpose bait, such as Sevin, is worthwhile to knock out a wide range of bugs, including pesky earwigs that damage blooms. It is good practice to cover bait to prevent harm to animals and birds. You can put the bait in a Coors Light can with a hole punched in the bottom of the can. Bait can be scattered between rows and raked into the soil or it can be covered with mulch. Mulch is a grass/weed control, an aid to soil moisture retention, and a soil conditioner when tilled in the following season. Quail nip off emerging sprouts and use planting holes for dust baths. Placing a chicken wire cylinder over the plant can provide protection from quail, bunnies and pussycats. Another solution is a one-gallon or larger plastic pot with its bottom removed. The pot will also help keep direct sun off tender plants. Plant protectors should be removed when plants are tall enough to avoid destructive damage.

Watering

Watering is a rather personal thing. Worthwhile advice is elusive. The general rule is to defer watering until sprouts emerge. Too much wetness might cause some tubers to rot. Soil and weather conditions govern watering needs. Each gardener must keep a close watch over plants and determine when to water and how much to apply.

Topping

To obtain more than one bloom from a dahlia plant, one must "top" it. After a plant has two to four sets of leaves, break off the very top. Be careful to take just the top. If you wait too long the plant will be so large that tipping will leave a hollow stem, which is an entry point for water. Water down a stem can cause rot down to the root. (See page 19 of the ADS "Guide to Growing and Caring for Dahlias" for more details).

A tuber may produce more than one sprout. For best blooms, all sprouts except one should be removed by fingering down to the tuber and breaking or cutting off the extra sprouts. Sprouts can be close together, so take care. A removed sprout can be treated as a cutting to grow another plant.

Minutes from the MBDS Meeting on April 13, 2012

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Kristine Albrecht called the meeting to order at 7:30PM. Number of members present: 45!

A big welcome was made to all our new members and we went around the room saying our names and how long we've been growing dahlias. We had members with less than a year to members with decades of experience!

Tuber Sale Report Back: We had a successful sale and also gained 10 new members with our free tuber and membership promotion. Iris Wallace and Lena Marsden have taken on the responsibility of organizing and maintaining our dahlia photo and card files for the sale. Thank you to Dean Barnes for mentoring them. Iris also stressed the importance of labeling tubers. This is something that needs to happen now when we are planting as well as during the digging, dividing and storing steps. Please remember that the entire ADS name needs to be written and spelled out correctly on the tuber and label tags.

Membership: Jean Biberdorf reported we currently have 60 members with MBDS and 25 are ADS members as well. These numbers include all new members gained from the Tuber sale as well as the demonstration and sale at ProBuild on Wednesday.

Newsletter: Jan wants more articles and pictures. Thank you Jan for all the hard work.

Culture: Kristine brought in a couple of plants to show what a virus can look like as well as one that had what appeared to be frost damage. Doris Wilson has extra string that she will bring in next month to tie up your plants.

Minutes: Motion was made to approve the March minutes which were then approved.

Treasury: Katy Bannister reported that we had a successful tuber sale. She received a bounced check. This is the first time that's happened that she's aware of. She will resubmit it.

Tuber Talk and demonstration was a success at ProBuild with 35 people present. They were very interested in growing and dividing dahlias and had many questions. ProBuild has invited us to come back again next year.

Upcoming events: Judging Seminar on July 14th at Santa Cruz Montessori School, San Leandro Show August 3-5, San Francisco Show August 17-19th, our show August 24-26 at Soquel High School, National Show in Portland this year is on Labor Day weekend August 31st – September 2nd, San Jose Show September 7-9 and Santa Cruz County Fair is the 2nd week of September.

Compost Tea Speaker: This month's speaker was David Perkins. He spoke on the benefits of making compost tea. Detailed information was shared about how adding good "stuff" to our soil will build up our soil biology and this in turn makes the nutrients more easily available to our plants. He explained that adding synthetic nutrients doesn't do anything to the longevity of our soil. The better our soil biology is, the less we need to add to it over time. David also had his "Bu's Blend" of Biodynamic Compost available to purchase at the end of the meeting. This is also available at many of our local nurseries. Go to www.malibucompost.com for more information.

Meeting was adjourned at 9 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted, Iris Wallace



Future Dates

May Meeting:	Friday, May 11
Judging Seminar:	July 14 Santa Cruz Montessori
San Leandro Show:	August 3-5
San Francisco Show:	August 17-19
MBDS Show:	August 24-26 Soquel High School
National Dahlia Show:	August 31 - September 2 Portland, Oregon
San Jose Show:	September 7-9
Santa Cruz County Fair:	Staging on September 9-10

The Crew

President: Kristine Albrecht
Vice President: Kevin Larkin
Treasurer: Katy Bannister
Secretary: Iris Wallace
Membership: Jean Biberdorf
Newsletter: Jan Palia
Website: Brion Sprinsock



**Please send all your fascinating photos and
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