

Monterey Bay Dahlia Society

THE DAHLIA DIRT



February 2016

Next Meeting

Friday, February 12 at Simpkins Swim Center

7:00 Pot Luck Dinner

7:30 Meeting

VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Starting Tubers for Early Planting

Having blooms as early as possible requires planting in March if you start with tubers. I don't like to plant tubers that are still dormant - in fact I prefer to have shoots that are inch or so in length. This requires "starting" the tubers indoors in a warm spot to insure they are ready to plant in mid-March. Late-February is a good time to make preparations for starting your tubers if you want to plant that early.

You'll find that some varieties will consistently sprout early - even before coming out of storage, and many varieties are consistently slow to sprout. A and AA varieties tend to be the slowest. With a goal of planting the first wave of tubers the 3rd week in March I will take roots of AA and A size dahlias and other varieties that I know are slow to sprout out of storage in late February. When taking roots out of storage I like to look closely at all of them to see which ones may have begun to sprout a bit - those are my first choice to plant.

Tubers are started in shallow trays or cut-down cardboard boxes with 2-3 inches of good potting soil moistened slightly. Set the tubers into the trays as close together as possible with the most promising eyes facing up - they can even be touching. The tubers don't need to be completely



covered. Place the tray full of tubers in a warm spot - 60 -70 degrees. They do not need a lot of light at this stage. In 7-10 days you should see some of the tubers sprouting and possibly forming fibrous roots. These are ready to plant or can be kept in the tray a while longer. If they are to be held you should move all of the more advanced tubers into a separate tray and increase the amount of light so the shoots don't stretch excessively. The slower sprouting tubers will, hopefully, eventually sprout and be ready when you are set to plant.

I've found this process of starting your tubers before planting significantly improves the chances of having consistent plantings with the fewest gaps. It does, however, require that you be very careful when planting not to break off the started shoot!

Spotted Snake Millipede (SSM) Alert

With the dramatic increase in damage many of us are experiencing from this new pest, we are trying to come up with some control measures to reduce the problems. Internet searches have yielded some promising cultural strategies that may help.

They overwinter in the soil most successfully when there is a large amount of undecomposed organic matter present. Unfortunately, many gardeners like to add organic matter in the winter so that it has broken down a bit by spring. It would seem that if you have a problem with SSM you probably want to rethink your use of organic matter and mulches. I am going to eliminate all use of mulch in a portion of my garden this coming season to see if there is a response.

In addition, frequent tillage seems to reduce the SSM population by disturbing their environment and drying out the eggs that are present in the soil. Tillage during the winter is difficult if the soil is consistently wet - or if you grow a cover crop. We don't grow a cover so will till the ground at least a couple of times prior to planting as the conditions allow. My hope is to till once in February and at least once more in March before planting.



There is also some hope that "bio-fumigation" with mustard cover crop may lower the SSM population. Kristine and Iris are trying and will hopefully see some response. I am experimenting on a small trial with a locally produced crushed mustard meal, tilled into the soil, to see if there is any response. We are also looking at soil drenches with various pesticides. So far organic pyrethrins appear effective at killing adult SSM. We are also testing Captain Jack's and may be

able to report results at the upcoming meeting

See you on Friday nite!

MINUTES

MBDS Minutes from meeting on January 8, 2016

Meeting called to order at 7:40.

Treasurer's Report: We are in good standing, however the bank balance is lower compared to the same period last year due to increased investments in show materials and the addition of the raffle expense.

Membership: There is a good core group of members who renew each year; some lost members and some new. Invoicing worked well for the ADS members.



Tuber Sale: 1st Saturday of April, April 2nd, with the sort March 30th, 31st and April 1st.

Pacific Southwest Dahlia Conference: Annual meeting February 13th

Dahlia Door Prize Raffle Winners:

Joe

Danny

Toni

Minutes respectfully submitted,
Maia Pedemonte

UPCOMING EVENTS

Pacific Southwest Dahlia Conference Meeting

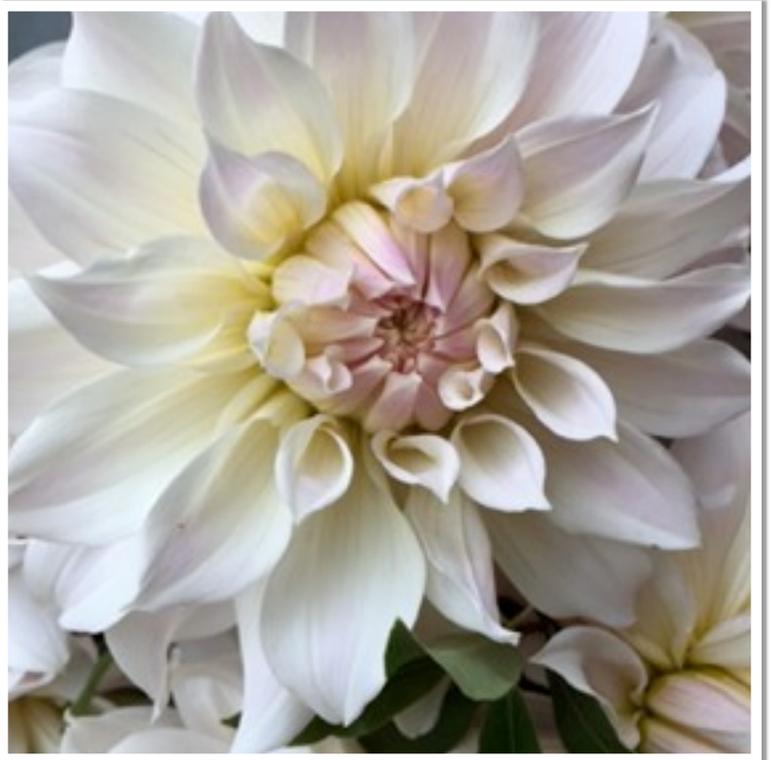
Coming up in February is the Pacific Southwest Dahlia Conference Annual Winter Meeting. The Dahlia Society of California is hosting the one-day event on February 13th, 9:00 am- 5:00 pm, at the San Francisco Presbyterian Church at the SW corner of Eucalyptus and 19th Avenue. It is in the same block as the big shopping mall on 19th Ave.

Tuber Sort

March 30th, 31st and April 1st.

Tuber Sale at Deerpark

Saturday, April 2



THE CREW



President: Kristine Albrecht

Vice President: Kevin Larkin

Treasurer: Katy Bannister

Secretary: Maia Morris

Membership: Jean Biberdorf

Newsletter: Jan Palia

Website: Brion Sprinsock

Please send all your fascinating photos and interesting tidbits for the newsletter to bgawlik@cruzio.com

Want to see past issues of the newsletter?

Check out our website mbdahlias.org