

The Dahlia Dirt

Newsletter of the Monterey Bay Dahlia Society

FROM THE PREZ
By Sharon Lucchesi

Wow, I can't believe that August is already here! With all of the foggy chilly weather it still feels like late winter. Oh well, such is.

I am looking forward to hearing how the gathering at Jack Nellany's went, as well as the judging seminar that was held July 31st.

Be on the lookout for upcoming shows. The Colorado Dahlia Society has a "dahlia-alert" that one can subscribe to alert us to shows: dahlias.net/showsbystate.htm

Before we know it OUR show will be upon us, so keep grooming for blooming!

We have a lot to discuss at our next show, please join us and lend us your suggestions.

Until then,

Scene from the
2009
MBDS Show



DAHLIA CULTURE TIPS

Dean Barnes advises on preparing to show your dahlias, focusing on bloom and vase preparation, pin frogs and staging blooms for shows.

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MBDS MINUTES 7/10

The MBDS meeting on July 9th covered many topics, e.g., the 5th Annual Garden Faire and the 1st Annual Open House of the Monterey Bay Greenhouse Growers.

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NEXT MEETING

Second Friday of every month
7:00 pm Potluck;
7:30 pm Meeting
• Come to Simkins Swim Center,
Community Room,
979-17th Avenue, Santa Cruz

AMERICAN DAHLIA SOCIETY RESEARCH COMMITTEE: PROJECT REPORT: CUT FLOWER VASE LIFE IMPROVEMENT

To evaluate the effects of commercially available treatments for cut flower vase water two products from Floralife, Inc. of Walterboro, South Carolina were tested by the Environmental Horticulture Department at the University of California at Santa Cruz using dahlias in the summer of 2009.

The products tested were Floralife Crystal Clear® Flower Food and Floralife® Flower Food. The products were selected for use based on recommendations from the Floralife company research department and because they are both commercially available in consumer sized packaging.



Contents of the products are proprietary secrets. The primary components are plant-based sugars to provide carbohydrates for cut flowers while in the vase along with antimicrobial agents to deter algae and other microbes from forming and blocking the flower vascular system. The products also contain various adjuvants to promote uptake and other

quality problems such as hardness and pH. Floralife, as well as other manufacturers of cut flower treatment products have extensive product lines of varying formulations suited to specific solutions.

Evaluation was performed on individual dahlia stems with 15 stems in each treatment and 3 replications of each treatment. Stems were cut and placed directly

into buckets of clear water in the early morning, temperature was 54 degrees F. In the lab all of the foliage except the first pair of leaves below the bloom was removed and the stems were recut to 14-16 inches. They were placed in individual stem vases containing the specified treatment and held in a well-lighted room out of direct sunlight during the evaluation period.

Two sets of test blooms were started to allow for evaluation where the vase contents were not changed during the trial in one set and where the vase contents were replaced after 3 days in the second set.

The blooms that were selected were all fully double dahlias that had reached the stage of approximately 70% fully open. Seven cultivars were used, 'Magic Moment', 'Alpen X', 'Janice', 'Woodland's Merinda', 'Jessica', 'Pop Willo', and 'Moray Susan'. As much as possible each set of 15 blooms in the treatments contained an even mix of each

cultivar. Bloom quality at the start of the test was excellent, therefore as a baseline each bloom was scored a 10 on the first day of evaluation. Evaluations followed at 2, 4, and 7 days. The blooms were rated for turgidity on a 1-10 scale where 10 equaled excellent as observed on the first day and 1 where more than half of the florets were showing signs of wilting or decay. The day on which the central disc became visible was also noted.

Results

Addition of Floralife products extended the vase life over blooms held in water only. The greatest increase in vase life was achieved by using the Floralife products combined with changing the water in the vase after three days. On average, replacing the vase contents extended vase life by two days and delayed the centers from popping by one day.

Submitted by Kevin Larkin
Chairman, ADS Research
Committee

Acknowledgements

The American Dahlia Society appreciates the efforts by Christof Hansen and his staff at the University of California Santa Cruz Environmental Horticulture Department. We also thank Floralife, Inc. for technical assistance in this evaluation.

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**MINUTES OF THE MONTEREY BAY DAHLIA SOCIETY,
MEETING OF JULY 9, 2010**

Sharon called meeting to order at 7:32

Sharon moved to approve the minutes from the June meeting at Tony & Alba's.

Newsletter

Wonderful Newsletter!
Karen still not receiving, but that problem is now solved.

Treasury Report

Everything is the same. No new members.

Garden Faire Report:

Thanks to Millie, George, Kevin, Katie, Sharon, Betty and Ozzy for providing plants. The Garden Faire is like the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show only about 1/10th of the size. There were people with various garden booths: bee guys, succulents, nurseries, composting info, etc.

New Business

☼ Katy is making sure we have the space for the Soquel High Show in September.

☼ Mini show will be on July 24th at Jack's. People should wear their nametags.

☼ County Fair: People should participate in all areas of the Fair: dahlias, roses, quilts, photo, food, etc. Doris will help replace the dahlias at the Fair. It was suggested that someone could give a talk about the dahlias. Kevin volunteered that he may do that. We will need "clerk" help on Monday September 13th at 10:00 a.m. at the Fair. Also help is needed on Sunday from 7:00 or 8:00 a.m. until evening. Need to have tables available for set-up.

☼ Dahlia Judging Seminar To be held on Saturday July 31st from 9:00-4:30, at the Church of Christ, 601 Mac Arthur Blvd, San Leandro. (510) 909-1127. No charge for the class.

☼ New and updated MBDS website. Thank you to Brion for creating. Gorgeous!!

☼ American Dahlia National Show will be hosted by MBDS and held at Mariott Hotel in Santa Clara, August 19-22nd, 2011

☼ Carol Kitayama was acknowledged and thanked for the outstanding cut flower greenhouse tour in Watsonville. One shared piece of advice pertained to hollow-stemmed flowers,

i.e. dahlias. They like acidic water. We learned that adding one (1) drop of vinegar in the vase will make the flowers last much longer. Sugar is not as good because the molecules are larger and will get blocked up in the capillaries.

☼ Sharon shared her "Pam Howden" story. Please be careful next year when labeling your tubers.

☼ Carol brought in her seedlings.

Cool weather has slowed down the dahlias. Signs of mildew and thrips. Spinosa helps. You can purchase this at Alladin Nursery, Garden Company Pro-Build. Green Life is the brand name.

Kristine is planning another Mills Garden Tour. Email list was gathered of those interested.

☼ Culture tips: Clipping odd branches out is fine. Discussion on leaving the lower leaves to help shade the plant from the sun vs. cleaning the lower leaves to discourage disease.

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DAHLIA CULTURE FOR JULY

By Dean Barnes

“THE SHOW IS THE THING”

Blue dots on your entry forms give good feelings! Enjoy the thrill of having one of your blooms on the “Court of Honor” table.

Bloom Preparation

The July newsletter had some words about bloom cutting and containers for bloom transport.

It is hard to predict which blooms will be just right the day of the show. About a week before the show, look for buds/stems that might be show worthy, and tie a cloth strip on the stem. This saves search time later and makes it easier to monitor the candidate blooms as the days wind down toward cutting time.

The ADS *Guide To Growing and Caring For Dahlias* has two paragraphs on cutting (p. 32). For our show, staging starts after tables are set up late Friday evening so we back off from then to fix a cutting time that allows for storage of blooms in a cool, dark room for several hours.

I like to cut Friday morning and put blooms in our cellar until evening. After having the awful experience of not knowing what variety I had

in hand at the show hall, I have been cutting cardboard squares that slip onto the stem as a label with class number and variety name. Blooms are entered according to class number. Spare blooms are good insurance.

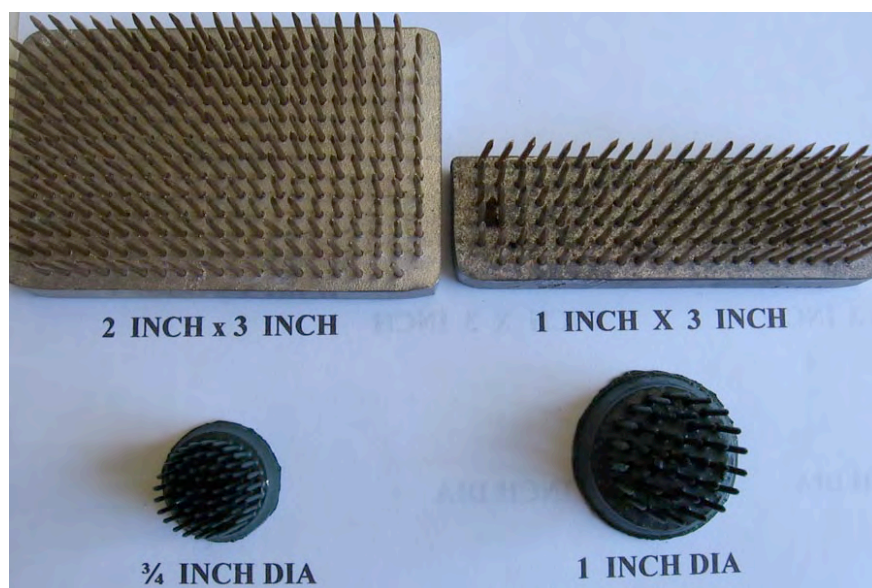
Vase Preparation for Shows

Don't let a lack of vases be an excuse for not entering blooms in shows. We call the container with a pin frog glued in it a vase but many very suitable containers are not really vases.

Vases for single blooms and for multiple blooms should be prepared ahead of time.

It always seems like more vases than you brought are needed because many blooms just don't match the vase. An assortment of vases is needed to accommodate variations in bloom size, leaf placement, stem length, etc.

The Goodwill Bargain Outlet is a good, inexpensive source of vases. Other thrift stores, and garage sales usually have some suitable vases available.



Pin Frogs for Vases

The big need is for vases for single blooms. Small frogs (3/4 in. or 1 in.) are suitable for single bloom vases. A larger frog might be too big for the vase and would be a waste of money.

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Unfortunately, ProBuild Garden Center and other stores, usually stock large round or rectangular frogs in demand for bouquets and arrangements. Small frogs can be special ordered.

The lead base of a frog can be easily sawed with a hacksaw.

A 2x3 in. rectangular frog (cost about \$10) can be cut in half to make two 1x3 in. frogs that are an ideal size for a triple bloom vase.

Saw a 1x3 in. frog twice to make three 1x1 in. frogs for single bloom vases.

Waterproof cement is essential for frogs. Aquarium cement available at pet stores is easy to use and holds well. Gathering up vases after the show will be easier if there is a name sticker on the bottom of the vase.



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Kevin brought in wild dahlia seeds to share. They will be singles with either yellow, orange or red with “lobey” foliage. First wet a paper towel, place the seeds on top so they’re not touching and make sure they have good contact with the paper towel. Saturated but no run off. Place on a plate and wrap in plastic wrap. Place on the top of refrigerator at 72-73 F degrees. After a few days (3-10 days to germinate) dibble and drop seed into sterilized soil. Gently pick the seed up. Don’t force the seed into the hole. Place about ¾” deep. White shoot gets planted down and green shoot up. The seeds are very tender. If there’s mold, kill off with a little bleach.

Meeting adjourned 8:30pm

Minutes respectfully submitted, Iris Wallace

Staging Blooms for Shows

The term staging means placing blooms in a vase in preparation for display at a designated place on a show table. Staging must conform to the Show Rules published in the Show Schedule. Two typical rules are:

“ **Foliage:** All dahlias entered in Sections A,----- must have at least the first pair of leaves below the bloom clearly visible and clearly attached to the stem.

Staging Aids: No other flower, vegetation, or artificial or mechanical support shall be used in any entry except in arrangement classes. No material used as props in staging an exhibit is to show above the edge of the container.”

Staging Tools

A few things are needed for use during staging of blooms. Be sure to bring a pen, a sharp knife, flower cutters, a roll of paper towels, a water container and your classification book.

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