

## Gold Beach, Oregon set for PNDC Show

by Bob Chibante

The Wild Rivers Dahlia Society is proud to announce we are hosting this year's 2015 Pacific Northwest Dahlia Conference Show. Considering it is only our 3<sup>rd</sup> show, I feel proud of our members for taking it on.

As with the rest of the region, we have been experiencing hot temperatures. For us, in the 90s right on the coast. Top it off with strong winds and we are having all the fun we need. So far the warmth and humidity has not produced any powdery mildew.

The show will be on Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Event Center on the Beach. Sat. 11am-5pm & Sun. 9:30am- 2pm, closing down early for those who will travel here. We are hosting the Conference Banquet at the show site upstairs overlooking the blooms. "The Jewels of the Northwest" has been chosen for the show, with Spartacus as the Bloom of the Year. While dahlias are the jewels of the show, the design classes were a challenge to come up with a corresponding theme. So, we took the "Jewels" to be either literal or figurative. After some research and input from other society members, we wanted to find what the "Jewel" of each society was in the PNDC. For us it is the long beaches and agates, the redwoods for our members to the south, SODS has some great oysters, hence pearls with a line design is for them. Ducks are the crown jewels of Eugene, Portland is known for roses, while Douglas County is home to some fine wineries. So far for Victoria we are going with a hanging basket homage for the gardens and still waiting on Nanaimo to hear what would best represent them. So far all I have heard from travelers from there in Gold Beach, is about the cost of the ferry. Sounds like gold to the ferry operators.

We really want to have each of our societies represented at the show. It would be nice to see as many of you as possible. Looking for accommodations or other questions, feel free to contact me at [dahlias@charter.net](mailto:dahlias@charter.net) Also, we still have sponsor opportunities. We have some great ribbons coming to take home with you. We have asked our members to produce at least one basket. It is important to help expand their knowledge and add impact to the show. They are rookies but, I am sure they will do okay. Besides great growing conditions, our conference has a reputation of having the best baskets on display.

On Sunday my garden will be open to all to walk thru. I have planted 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year seedlings in groups to provide a chance to judge trial garden style. I will have score sheets available. Look for our television ads soon which are provided by the City of Gold Beach. Come stay and play!

### 2015 PNDC Dahlia Shows

#### Victoria Dahlia Society

August 29-30

West Shore Town Center, Victoria

Show Flower: Show n Tell

#### Nanaimo Dahlia Society

August 22-23

Country Club Centre

#### Wild Rivers Dahlia Society & PNDC Annual Dahlia Show

August 22 - August 23, Gold Beach  
Event Center on the Beach

Show Flower: Spartacus

#### Portland Dahlia Society

September 5-6, Canby

Clackamas County Fairgrounds

Show Flower: Hollyhill Bill M

Challenge Flower: Vesuvius

#### Southern Oregon Dahlia Society

September 12-13, North Bend

Pony Village Mall

Show Flower: Elvira

#### Lane County Dahlia Society

September 19-20, Eugene

Lane Events Center

Show Flower: Chimacum Davi

#### Douglas County Dahlia Society

September 26-27, Roseburg

Douglas Co. Fairgrounds Floral Bldg

Show Flower: Aitara Rufus



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## From the PNDC President

Dear Fellow PNDC Members,

The summer of 2015 has presented some challenges for dahlia growers. Unseasonably hot and dry weather has made for a difficult start to this year's dahlia season. Keeping them evenly moist and growing normally seems to be the ticket in my garden. Nonetheless, the flowers will be very early this year. Hope this is a boon to the AA specialists.

Wayne Shantz has for many years served as PNDC's Judge's Evaluation Chair. Due to health concerns, Wayne has elected to step down from the Judge's Evaluation post. We all very much appreciate Wayne and Eleanor's valued contributions to our conference. Wayne and Eleanor continue to serve as ADS National Representatives for the PNDC and work on the ADS National Classification Committee.

Larry Smith from our Portland Society has consented to serve as PNDC's Judge's Evaluation Chair. Larry has held most of the offices in the Portland Society including two terms as President. When in 2012 Portland hosted the ADS National show, Larry was tapped to coordinate the show's events. I'm sure Larry will have some comments and requests in this newsletter. Please help make everyone's job easier by complying with

Larry's requests and suggestions. I very much appreciate Larry's willingness to step up and take on this important responsibility.

We will have two PNDC sponsored judging schools available this season. Portland will host a school on Saturday, August 1<sup>st</sup> at the Georgetown Realty Offices located at 1000 NE 122<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Portland, OR 97230.

The class will begin at 9:00 AM and last until around 4:00 PM. The class will use the "team teaching" approach with several presenters. There will be a pot luck lunch for all to enjoy. There is no cost for the course itself. The materials are the 2015 Classification Book and the ADS Judging Manual which will be available for \$5 each. Membership in the ADS and the PNDC will be required for new candidate judges.

Our Lane County Society will sponsor a Judging School on Saturday, August 29<sup>th</sup>. Our Wild Rivers Society will be sponsoring this year's Conference Show.

The show dates are August 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> in Gold Beach Oregon. We will also have our traditional show banquet Saturday evening, August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Thanks so much to Bob Chibante and crew for hosting!

Best wishes to you all,  
Mike Riordan, PNDC President

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## News from PNDC Spring Meeting by Cheryle Hawkins



At the April 18 meeting held in Castle Rock, Washington, PNDC representatives who attended were delivered two resignations. After many years, Wayne Shantz stepped down as the PNDC judges chair citing health conditions preventing him from continuing in this role. His valuable service, foresight, and ability to

oversee the complexity of the Judges Chair duties will certainly leave large shoes to fill.

Cheryle Hawkins, serving as the PNDC Secretary and Newsletter Editor since 2013, also submitted her resignation from the Secretary position. She explained to the group how her intentions were to handle both roles, however this past year her mother passed away and her priorities have shifted. She offered to continue being the Newsletter Editor if the board was willing to separate that job from the officer role of Secretary. The board unanimously accepted both resignations and accepted Cheryle's offer to continue as Newsletter Editor. At that time there was no further discussion regarding nominees for the vacant positions. Elva distributed the 2015 PNDC Roster. Please note my correct e-mail is icehawk@q.com and phone number is 541-954-9694.

In other business there was a lengthy discussion concerning our dahlia societies from Canada, Nanaimo and Victoria, that must travel great distance and incur abnormally high travel costs in order to attend our April PNDC meeting in Castle Rock. The discussion centered

on the desire to retain our member societies and at what cost can we afford to not support them through incentives. The cost of ferry travel is exhorbant, not to mention the cost of gas. After deliberating long and hard, a proposal was made and approved in order to encourage the participation of these societies. The PNDC will provide a travel stipend to each Canadian dahlia society of up to \$150 to help offset the cost of ferry travel in order to attend our Spring meeting held in Washington.

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I am sending with this newsletter the minutes that I took at the April 2014 meeting held in Castle Rock, WA. As embarrassing as it is to be so late, I admit that I am struggling with a lot on my plate now. These minutes were intended to be distributed at the August 2014 meeting in Victoria, however I couldn't attend that meeting even though I was almost there.

Michael and I were on the ferry to Victoria and had just passed Friday Harbor when I received a call that my mother was in the emergency room with a brain hemorrhage. When we reached Sydney, we turned around and began a long trek racing back to Eugene. Michael and I got there in time to meet my family and stay with my mom until she passed a few hours later. Thanks to Elva for taking the meeting minutes at the 2014 PNDC fall meeting for me.

I am going to send a separate mailing in a couple of weeks that will include the minutes from Fall 2014, minutes of Spring 2015, as well as the Treasurer report from the April 2015 meeting.

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## News from the Portland Dahlia Society .... by Tiffany Boatwright

This year PDS has nominated and approved two couples for lifetime membership for their outstanding contributions to our society. They are Mark and Laura Oldenkamp and Bob and Cynthia Patterson. Be sure to give them a round of thanks.

PDS will hold a Judging School on August 1<sup>st</sup> from 9am to 5pm. Location is Georgetown Realty, 1000 ne 122<sup>nd</sup> Ave, Portland 97230. This will include a potluck lunch so please bring a favorite item to share with others. This is free and is a great opportunity for new members to learn about judging and for senior members to refresh their judging skills. Required course materials are the ADS Judging Manual and The Classification and Handbook of Dahlias. Each may be purchased for \$5 at the judging school for those who don't already have them. Please contact Mark Oldenkamp to register for the class at [dahliafan57@gmail.com](mailto:dahliafan57@gmail.com)

Our annual show will be held for the last time at the Canby Events Center this year. Next year we're moving to Oaks Park in Portland and will have a larger venue, better lighting and more public to view our dahlias as

well as finally being located in Portland. With the change of venue comes a change in next year's show date. We will hold our show on the weekend prior to Labor Day weekend (Aug. 27-28).

This year our show dates are September 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> and early entries may be made Friday evening. The Challenge flower is Vesuvius and Flower of the Year is Hollyhill Bill M.

New this year at our show is a photography competition. Judging will be based on content, composition and photographic excellence. There is a maximum of 2 entries per class. Photos must have been taken in 2014 or 2015. There is no minimum size requirement for photos but the maximum size is 8 x 12. Photos must be flush mounted or window mounted on 11 x 14 mats which will be available for purchase at the show for \$1 each. A unique registration number will be given to each photography exhibitor. Please see the show schedule for class and registration information. Larry Sawyer will be in charge of photography and may be contacted at 503-771-1616.

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## Roll the Dice and Show! .... by Larry Smith

Back in 1992, when I entered my first ADS show, I had serious trepidation about the potential show quality of my dahlias. I had won a few blue ribbons at the county fair, but would my blooms be good enough for a "real" dahlia show? My intimidation was somewhat eased when I took several blues in the novice class. For the next two years, my confidence grew, culminating in Novice Sweepstakes with over 250 points in only my third show. That qualified me to move up to Amateur, where I figured I would have several years to really learn the ins and outs of dahlia showmanship. Well, scratch that, I won Amateur Sweepstakes in my first show. It was 1995 and in those days the rules directed that if you won a Sweepstakes, you had to immediately move up to the next level. GULP! After only 4 shows, I found myself competing in Open Class. It was immediately back to wondering if I had anything worth showing against the "big boys" (and girls). I became hypercritical of each flecked floret, bug hole, and short stem. Should I even bother staging what were, to my eyes, less than perfect blooms?

Oddly enough, over the years, the judges seemed to react more favorably to some of my almost-didn't-get-set-out also rans as many won blue ribbons and some even made it to the Head Table. That caused me to develop an attitude of what the heck, put them on the show table even if they don't look perfect to me.

Even if they don't win, they are adding color to the table and interest to the show. Somewhere along the line, that thinking resulted in a couple of Open Sweepstakes awards, plenty of Head Table exhibits, and even a Best in Show winner at the 2014 National Show (this on an entry that I, as a Senior Judge, was not sure would qualify for a ribbon in the tough National competition). And I didn't even have to bribe the judges!

On that note, I challenge you to take a chance.

Even if you have never shown a dahlia before, remember there is the novice class where the judges know that the entrants are just starting to learn about showing and tend to be much more lenient and encouraging. The same advice goes to you exhibitors in Amateur and Open Class. You are adding to the show and giving others the opportunity to learn and to admire a larger number of varieties. Show what you have and let the judges decide. If you don't, you never know when your own hypercritical standards may have denied one of your blooms that you decided to leave at home the chance to grace the Head Table. Let's roll those dice and make our 2015 shows the best ever!

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## PNDC Dahlia Schools Planned



August 2  
Portland Dahlia Society  
Contact Mark Oldenkamp:  
[dahliafan57@gmail.com](mailto:dahliafan57@gmail.com)

August 8  
Nanaimo Dahlia Society  
Contact Judy Stephens:  
[d-acres@telus.net](mailto:d-acres@telus.net)

August 29  
Lane County Dahlia Society  
Contact Michael Canning:  
[icehawk@q.com](mailto:icehawk@q.com)

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## News from Victoria Dahlia Society ... by Ryan Berry

Like many across the continent we are seeing significant effects of drought. Watering restrictions are in place on Vancouver Island, and are severe in some localities. The Sooke reservoir, whose dam was raised in 2002 and is currently 81% full, has meant that Victoria and Saanich have not been forced to suffer restrictions beyond what is seasonal. But this is the exception to the experience on the Island.

I have noticed the dahlias are growing well, but there is more evidence this year of stressed plants, disease, and pests. It has become a near daily obsession for me to examine the health of a few rare & treasured cultivars which are showing signs of concern. I almost hadn't noticed the majority of the dahlias are actually doing fine, growing strong, and responding to this early and

intense summer heat. I hope the blooms are still in good shape in late August and September when our nearby dahlia shows are hosted!

The Victoria Dahlia Society is looking forward again to hosting our 69th Annual Show, August 29th & 30th, 2015 at the Westshore Town Centre. Details and our show catalogue may be found on our website or by contacting . If you are considering attending please let us know so we can assist in recommending accommodations and anticipate any needs you might have. Participants (judges, clerks, competitors) coming from off-Island are offered a free meal at the Show Dinner on Saturday evening (please register in advance.) We look forward to seeing you there!

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## News from Nanaimo Dahlia Society ... by Judy Stephens

Our summer has been as dry as everyone's. We have resorted to hand watering as well as using soaker hoses.

The plants just don't seem to be getting enough water. When digging down into the soil, it is powder dry so it makes a person wonder as to how much of the water the plants are getting with only a soaker hose watering.

We had two days of on and off showers which made the plants stand up and take notice. Just that little bit made a difference. With severe restrictions of watering, many people have had to make choices of what needed to be kept watered and what to let go brown. Of course, we are choose the Dahlias to be watered instead of the lawns!

We are having a judging school on August 8<sup>th</sup>. It is a one day judging school. Connie Young-Davis, from the Victoria Society, will be our guest speaker. The

Victoria Society has been invited to attend, but we seem to be in competition with an early dahlia show in the Washington state area that some of their members are attending. Our judging school will be held at the VIU Paine Horticultural Centre at 2324 East Wellington Rd. Nanaimo. Google maps is a good source for directions.

Our Annual Glad and Dahlia Show is on August 22-23, 2015. It will be held at the usual place which is Country Club Centre on the island highway that runs through the city of Nanaimo. We have been fortunate to have the mall support each year with minor changes and added costs.

Our dahlias are popping with colour but some are getting sunburnt also. We are in the process to put up our shade cloth to protect the blooms for the shows. Happy growing and showing!

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## News from Southern Oregon Dahlia Society ... by Paulette Woodward

Here we are with a super summer; the last half of July feels as if we're living east of the cascades - very little of the moist coastal fog.

Having an extremely dry spring, planting was done 3 weeks early with the hopes that there would be blooms for the fair - but no! You'd think with all the sunshine that plants would go shooting out of the ground. It will be interesting to see which varieties will thrive and which blooms will win top awards at the shows this year with all of this heat.

This year I'm trying to incorporate dahlias in the flower beds as Cora Vandervelden does (worthy of pictures for a magazine). It is something that we encourage people to do at the tuber sales and shows. Some varieties during the growing season really stand out as plants we have lacey foliage, dark leaves and stems or stalks forming a clean vase shape before the blooms come on the scene. I'll have to do quite a bit of critiquing being so used to rectangular dahlia beds with neat rows staked, organized and handy but not nearly as intriguing.

Enough about what's going on with me, this year has thrown a curve to all active members. The biggest one

is to David Parmeter, our president. He's going to OHSU in Portland for experimental cancer treatments. This has been going on for more than a year, we hope for the best treatment and that Connie and him come through this.

Before David went to Portland he arranged with the city of North Bend to put in a garden at the south end of 101 by the Little Theater on the Bay. A challenge to put in a new bed in a new location and as with all public gardens there is a problem with vandalism. It will be exciting to see how the plants progress and the public's reception.

The show is running on schedule - showbooks are printed and judging invitations are being sent out.

In August our picnic will be at Gary Swan's, our Vice President, always a delight wonderful gardens, and delicious food by Gary. We take this time to have seedling bench judging and mock trial garden judging. We miss the judging schools, they were great for reengaging the brain to focus on objectives and systematic judging. Let's not forget the great companionship.

We're in the middle of an adventure so let's enjoy it.

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## News from Lane County Dahlia Society ... by Michael Canning

Greetings from Bluejean! As we look forward to our blooms, the forecast is calling for another blistering hot spell headed our way as August begins. It seems like we've been on some kind of weather roller coaster to start this 2015 season. Just when we settle down to ideal growing conditions for a week or two somebody turns up the heat to broil again. We may need some divine intervention this year!

The Lane County Dahlia Society will host a one day Dahlia judging school on Saturday August 29<sup>th</sup>. It will be team taught by some of our most knowledgeable growers. The venue is the Eugene Garden Club at 1645 High street in Eugene. Registration and coffee will be from 8:00-8:30AM, and the session will begin promptly at 8:30. We expect to finish at 3:00PM. Sandwich lunch will be served about half way through the day. The sandwich will be provided, and participants are encouraged to bring a side dish of salad or desert to round out the faire. The charge for the school is \$15.00 per individual plus the required publications and dues for PNDC and ADS membership if you need them. " This helps us cover the cost of the building rental, class materials and the lunch. The 2002 edition of the "Guide to Judging Dahlias" is still the most current, and we will

be using the 2015 edition of the "Classification and Handbook of Dahlias". We have easy to fill out registration forms available from Michael Canning of LCDS. Advance registration helps us know what to plan for. My email is , and my phone number is 541-954-9191 - if you need a form, or have questions. Come to the school if you need to fill out your judging requirements or if you just wish to know more about our favorite flower. It's a great opportunity to meet folks who are as passionate as you about Dahlias.

LCDS will host our 52<sup>nd</sup> Dahlia show on the weekend of September 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. The venue is the same as the last few years, the Wheeler pavilion at the Lane Events Center (aka Lane County fairgrounds) in Eugene.

We will be mailing judging invitations in the next couple of weeks. The show theme this year is "Dancing with Dahlias", and the show flower is the gorgeous miniature ball, Chimacum Davi. Please join us for our annual late season celebration of our flower. As always the competition will be keen and the fellowship overflowing.

We are looking forward to visiting with many of you at your shows as well as ours this season. Good luck coping with this weather!

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## Welcome Larry Smith as new PNDC judges chair



Many thanks to Wayne for his years of competent service. I have agreed to attempt to fill some big shoes as I take over that position for the 2015 show season.

I will be learning the job of PNDC's Judge's Accreditation Chair as I go and ask in advance for your patience as I complete the necessary learning curve. One thing I do know is that the information you, as judges, send do me will be critical in ensuring that you get proper credit for all of the good work you are doing. This is especially critical for those of you who are wishing to advance to the next judging level. I tend to be a perceptive person, but if you don't send in an accurate report by September 30, you won't get the credit you deserve.

Attached is the 2015 report form. You may send your reports to me at: 4227 SE 76th Avenue, Portland OR 97206. I do not have long distance phone service, but you can email me at [thebodysmith@hotmail.com](mailto:thebodysmith@hotmail.com)

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## Names Do Matter by Ted J. Kennedy

We are breeders of dahlias and my wife and I are tasked with naming our new introductions every year. In many ways, naming a dahlia cultivar is like naming your new born child. Naming children used to be an exercise of selecting a family name that is re-cycled through the generations. Then in the 1960s, there was a real trend to use names that were clever and original(or maybe weird and inappropriate depending on your point of view). ). Blossom, Phoenix, Grace, Lily, Savannah, Angel, Jasmine, Destiny, Trinity, Autumn, Faith and Genesis are all example of names that have roots in the 1960s hippie generation.

There is one big difference between naming children and naming flowers: It is mandatory to name the child immediately after the birth. A dahlia flower can be grown for several years without a name and that is good and bad. It is good in that lots of thought and negotiation can occur during the naming process. It is bad in that it seems to be a never ending process that goes on for several years. There are so many good names that I like and she does not like and vice versa.

Flower names may be divided into three or four basic categories:

(1) **People names.** Many people love to name flowers after people. Many of the prolific flower breeders seem to have numerous sons, daughters grandsons, second cousins, god parents or whatever. However, the two most important categories seem to be spouses and mothers. Many breeders wait many years to create the perfect flower to be named after the mother or the spouse. I know of one breeder who died before he could name the perfect flower after his wife. An interesting sidelight of naming dahlias after relatives is that you know the names of just about everybody's name in that family. I made the mistake once of saying, "How is April Dawn doing?" and the answer was something like, "She just got married." Of course I was asking about the flower's recent record in the shows.

**Caveat:** If you start naming dahlias after your relatives, all the relatives will expect to have a flower named after them. They may even want to pick out their own bloom. You are not allowed to name ugly dahlias for people you do not like. A more subtle approach is to name one that does not make tubers that keep. They will be happy and it will be gone and forgotten in a few years. There is another downside to naming flowers after your relatives: some of their names are just not very good. Prunella comes to mind.

**Warning:** If a flower is named after the breeder's spouse or mother, be careful about saying anything negative to the breeder as it may interpreted as an insult to his beloved. On the positive side, it is probably a safe bet that it is pretty good dahlia and worth trying.

And every year they publish the list of the most popular baby names. This can be a great resource as people love to buy dahlias with the same name as their children or grand children.

Another name source is historical names. People remember these names and they can work very well. However, steer clear of names like Dracula or Mussolini or Caligula. Caesar and Cleopatra could be pretty good along with Marc Antony.

(2) **Color names.** Many good dahlia names explicitly or subtly describe the color of the flower. I always liked the name Just Peachy because it is a positive saying and we all know the color of a peach(not really, as peach is a different color to different people, but you get the idea). Many dahlias have rather mundane color names and some people think they are bit simplistic. Hollyhill Big Pink comes to mind. A person in the UK was aghast that we would use such a tawdry name. It must be a UK thing. There are lots and lots of color names and examples are numerous. Purple Urple, Purely Purple, Hillcrest

Royal, Purpliscious, Plum Pretty,

(3) **Marketing or Clever Names.** At one nursery they have had dahlia naming contests that have resulted in some clever names. And a clever name can really sell a flower. At Swan Island they sell a lot of a rather ordinary flower called "Junkyard Dog". Perhaps the buyers get a kick out of the incongruity of a rabid dog name on a flower. One source for good dahlia names are the names of other flowers from seed catalogs. When you look at a seed catalog you will find many dahlia names on other flowers. Many dahlias have been named after auto brand brands and Accord, Corvette, Mercury, and Sunbeam are examples. Again there are losers in this list and Edsel would not really work very well. I believe that Ferrari and Lamborghini are still available. And of course popular names from television or the cinema work well. Spartacus and Zorro are great examples. And of course famous singers and movie stars are a fair game. I get a kick out of the name Verrone's Taylor Swift. I hope she does too. One problem with many names is that they may have a trade mark and unless you like to hire attorneys, they should not be used. I believe that Orange Julius did not like having a flower named after their drink.

(4) **Names that seem to be used over and over.** Joy, Glow, Moon, Sun and many others are repeated in various iterations. I suppose one could combine some of these overly common names to amplify the effect. Joyful Moonglow would work.

There have been some disputes over the use of a particular name. A flower was named "Moonlight Sonata" by two breeders and I believe they both thought the name was stolen from the other when in reality they both stole it from Beethoven.

(5) **Names that should not be used.** There are so many good names for dahlias that is hard to believe that people would use some real losers. The late Bill Mishler did not follow this rule when he named one of his nicest flowers "Dufus". Even though it had outstanding form and color and was easy to grow, it disappeared from commerce within a few years.

One limiting issue is the rule devised by the ADS that a dahlia name may not have more than 22 letters including spaces. This because the classification book has only that many spaces for a name in the name column. If a name is more than 22 letters, ADS may list it in a truncated version(yes, I had to look up that word and it means chopped off at the end).



I have not mentioned the practice of using a “Kennel” name as part of the dahlias official name and as such it is a “breeder signature” . Many breeders have done this over the years, Kenora, Camano, AC, Bloomquist, Lakeview, Hamari, Clearview, Croyden, Ryecroft, Barbarry and a hundred more are examples. The obvious advantage is that one knows who originated the flower. Some of the people who used this system, used one name for show flowers and another for other flowers. The Smiths used Chimacum for show flowers and Valley

was the name used for the others. Many of these “lesser” flowers turn out to be show winners and Valley Porcupine is a top winning novelty flower and Valley Rustbucket does it's share of winning. Keewatin was Gordie Leroux's appellation for flowers not earning the name of Kenora.

And as I write this there are several seedlings that need names. My spouse is the official “Name Approval Person” and she does not like almost any name I suggest. But eventually, we will agree and hopefully, our seedling will be worthy of it's name.

## Dahlia Diseases

by Wayne Shantz

### Introduction:

Disease may sneak into the dahlia landscape as easily as a breeze wafts across one's face. The virus merits a few comments since an apparent healthy dahlia can suddenly appear diseased, even though it comes from what appears as palpable healthy stock the prior season. Virus infection determination extends beyond the scope of most gardeners, but the roguing of questionable plants will protect the rest of the garden from contamination. The most common symptoms include stunted plants, leaf malformation, smaller and somewhat twisted, and plants with a lack of obvious vigor. The American Dahlia Society project, headed by plant virologist Dr. Hanu Pappu out of Washington State University, has begun to provide information based on reliable research.

Many growers question such a severe strategy, especially if they paid a fair amount for the tuber or plant, but the practice of roguing will eliminate affecting an entire garden as well as other growers' gardens. Stunted plants do not grow as they should, usually with stiff, dwarfed and twisted leaves. Generally, the leaf indicates much about the health of a plant. Mottled or light green surrounding the leaf veins when held to the light will warn of a growing problem. Some plants do not even exhibit a disease and have no apparent symptoms, often called carriers. If plants around such a tolerant plant appear infected, one needs to observe such plants closely. After the show season, many growers stop grooming their gardens. Thus, the plants become somewhat vulnerable to pests, such as aphids, and air born fungi, especially if one does not deadhead spent blooms. As a consequence, the grower will not see the symptoms until the ensuing year.

As a rule, virus does not kill a dahlia but will impair it. It is imperative to remove the sources of infection. For instance, dahlia literature does not mince words and states that aphids transmit disease. A grower from Australia believes that all dahlia plants possess virus. He further hypothesizes that humans also harbor viruses but possess an immune system that thwarts many potential disease problems. Thus, he extrapolates that a dahlia grower needs to employ husbandry that strengthens plants. He avers that disease will more readily affect weak plants.

### Identifiable diseases:

**Powdery mildew:** The plant shows a white to light grayish powdery substance. Poor circulation and cloudy, humid weather augment the problem. Often the damage is done by the time a grower notices the substance. It can flourish quickly, attacking small buds, and leaves that may die prematurely. To control powdery mildew, one should avoid overcrowding the plants and planting them in damp, shady places. A number of organic controls are now on the market for curtailing powdery mildew.

**Dahlia smut:** This fungus disease causes silvery spots on leaves that eventually turn brown and often drop to the ground. If the spots are not checked, they can rot through the leaf. Usually an acidic soil condition is the cause. One can control smut by collecting and burning affected plant parts. At harvest, one should destroy the plant entirely. Smut often appears in the same location the next year.

**Crown gall:** Clumps appear with abnormal cauliflower-like tumors at the junction of tubers and stems. Usually the plants lack vigor and do not become readily apparent until one digs in the fall. One should always destroy the affected plants and never succumb to the temptation of saving a part of the clump that does not appear diseased. If planted, it will again be affected as before.

**Cucumber mosaic:** Plants will possess a banding of leaf veins mottled with a paler green. Leaves tend to yellow along the veins (chlorosis) and may blister on the back. On occasion only the larger veins will appear mottled. Normally, it is much easier to determine mosaic when plants are emerging. These plants may grow out of the apparent symptoms. To maintain a clean garden, one must rogue these plants. Leaf hoppers, aphids, and occasionally thrips are the culprits that affect the plant.

**Spotted wilted virus:** Scattered pale green spotting appears on the leaves that will gradually drop off the branches. Typically, one will see a light green and wilted leaf. Affected tomato plants often become the agent of transfer to the dahlia. Thrips are often the transferal agent for the spread of wilt. They will attack the base of stems, especially in moist conditions. Leaves tend to twist and

# Dahlia Diseases ... by Wayne Shantz

appear distorted. If the condition of the plant is severe, burning the entire plant stops further damage. Copious weeding will also prevent or minimize further disease problems.

**Ring Spot:** One can identify affected plants by the defined ringed and patterned markings. Some growers have called the disease oak leaf or spotted wilt. Regardless, zigzag markings and rings of various sizes appear. Plants will sometimes grow out of the apparent symptoms while others will get worse. Affected plants should be dug and destroyed. Control of aphids is an imperative to combat this disease.

**Sclerotinia stem rot:** (*Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*) A member of the LCDS first encountered the term *Sclerotinia* while attending the 1997 ADS National Convention in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Since then it has appeared a number of times in Oregon. It plays havoc on ornamentals including but not limited to the aster, begonia, chrysanthemum, dahlia, fuchsia, gerbera, lupine, and petunia. It also affects herbs and spices including coriander, dill, fennel, and winter cress. Other affected agricultural crops include: alfalfa, canola, chives, dry bean, onion, potato, sunflower, sweet clover (annual flowering) and red clover. Vegetables and fruits that it affects include asparagus, bean, broccoli, cabbage, cucumber, eggplant, lettuce, parsley, pea, tomato and watermelon. It is easy to conclude that *Sclerotinia*, often known as white mold, attacks numerous species (over 380) and causes problems for many plant growers. In short, it is an insidious disease.

**Symptoms:** Early signs of *Sclerotinia* become evident when stems begin to yellow immaturely and the outer stem tissues begin to shred. A white, cotton appearing substance will begin to spread over affected parts. In the stem, hard black fungal structures known as sclerotia varying from 1 mm to 2 cm (3/4 inch) in length will appear. A grower who suspects that a plant may have *Sclerotinia* can check its condition by slicing the yellowish stem. If the stem has the disease, it will show a cottony white mold in which often black sclerotia will appear. The stem must NOT be checked in the garden since the black fungal structures will tumble down the stem like a marble rolling down a chute. These sclerotia can be round, oval, or irregular in shape. After the stems appear bleached, they die prematurely and if at the time of flowering will produce little to no seed.

**Disease cycle:** If a plant is left unattended, the black sclerotia will fall on the soil where they can exist for many years. These sclerotia that appear near the soil's surface will germinate fruiting bodies (apothecia) that appear similar to a tiny mushroom or a miniature golf tee, some with a hole surrounded by a thin white border. The apothecia produce and eject air-borne spores (ascospores) that the wind carries (up to a mile) to non-living or mature plant parts such as fallen dahlia petals. The spores can then use the flower part as a food source. If the weather conditions are sufficiently cool and enough

moisture exists (44 – 68 degrees F.) lasting for two to three days, these spores will germinate. At this point, the fungus can affect the green tissue of the plant. In the affected plant, mold will continue to grow in the stem where new sclerotia will form. If left unattended, these sclerotia will fall to the ground and complete the cycle.

**Disease prevention and possible cure:** Dahlia growers should attend to their dahlias on a regular basis, making sure to deadhead and maintain a clean garden. In the fall when they dig, they should burn stalks and foliage if at all possible. Affected plants should be burned. Even though dahlia growers may pay attention to cleanliness, the wind may carry spores to the garden from a distance. If this event occurs, growers may have to resort to sprays or another means of diverting the progress of the spores. Growers should always be alert to apothecia, regularly checking for any telltale signs. If they detect these small white, mushroom-like bodies on the ground, they should carefully remove them and place them in a container so that they can discard them appropriately. They should also make sure to keep mildew from spreading.

The number one control of *Sclerotinia* is hygiene. Cutting out brownish appearing stems and making sure to not split the stem open is imperative. Those black, beady bodies will quickly infest a garden without much recourse. These sclerotia carry the disease from one season to the next, and produce an enormous number of spores that can transfer by wind from one plant and area to another. In the transfer, they can attach to a dropped petal or leaf. One cannot allow them a place to begin a cycle.

If a gardener has a problem with *Sclerotinia*, Dr. Keith Hammett, a horticultural pathologist working out of Auckland, NZ, recommends that the tops of a plant be cut back close to the stem and observed carefully for any sign of the disease, and eradicated if some signs are found. He further advises that one who has such a problem should dip their tubers in copper oxychloride prior to storing the excised tubers.

In summary, a disease that is as widespread as sclerotia deserves a conscientious dahlia grower's attention. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, the old adage advises. Thus, attending to hygiene and cleanliness in the dahlia patch and deadheading of blooms can be a strong deterrent to *Sclerotinia*. For sure, growers cannot ignore this disease if they see it in the patch.

