

The Dahlia Society of Nova Scotia Quarterly Newsletter JULY 06



What's New

We are now getting used to our new digs at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History at 1747 Summer St. in Halifax. Parking doesn't seem to be a problem, considering initial fears of parking tickets. The meeting rooms are spacious and attendance is good.

Since my last newsletter, the annual tuber sale at the Mic Mac Mall has taken place and proved to be a financial success again this year. The buying public came early and kept coming. I got a few calls from people who had missed the sale and who wanted information on how to track down some tubers. Hopefully, they were able to get in touch with those growers I recommended.

Also, the Dahlia Society Tuber Auction was a success. It's difficult to understand how normally reserved, intelligent people, can start waving handfuls of money around when a proven winner is put on the auction block. Nevertheless, a great time was had by all in attendance and those people were ready to buy, if the shortness of the business part of the evening was any indication.

Program and Events for 2006:

June 30	- Slide Show 2005
July & August	- No meeting
September 29	- Cutting, Storing tubers & seed collecting
October 27	- Putting your garden to bed
November 24	- Slide Show 2006
December	- No meeting

Events:

July 23 - Annual Picnic

The DSNS Annual Picnic will be held at the home of Joyce and Eric Higgins, 1883 Higginville Road, Higginville, Halifax County, N.S. Everything starts at 1 pm with a garden tour of their beautiful gardens. At this time of the growing season, their lilies and roses should be spectacular. I also hear that a new rock wall has been constructed to add to the lovely setting. Members may bring a guest and also a pot-luck dish; BBQ chicken will be provided by the society. Eric & Joyce's phone number is 384-2764. Also, the map on the next page will hopefully be of some assistance:



- August 14 - 19- Lawrencetown Exhibition (<http://www.valleyweb.com/valleyex>)
August 16 - 19- Halifax County Exhibition, Middle Musquodoboit (<http://www.halifaxcountyex.com>)
August 22 - 26- Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition, Truro (<http://www.nspe.ca>)
September 9 - Dahlia Society Annual Show at the Bedford Place Mall
September 17 - Halifax City Garden tours:
1:30 - 3:00 p.m. Public Gardens,
Veterans Memorial & Heather Drope;
2:30 - 4:00 p.m. Sherma Richards - refreshments
September ?? - Digging up tubers at Veterans Memorial

Dahlia Judges Training Program

Anyone interested in becoming a dahlia judge please contact Arthur Haskins at 668-2838 or email me at (ahaskins@eastlink.ca). This is a 2-year program of study and practical training, leading to certification as an accredited ADS dahlia judge. This is not a program to learn how to exhibit dahlias, but only how to effectively judge them. Accredited judges who would like to up grade to a Senior Judge are also asked to contact Arthur.

On The Lighter Side

Hello, welcome to the Psychiatric Hotline.

If you are obsessive-compulsive, please press 1 repeatedly.

If you are co-dependant, please ask someone to press 2.

If you have multiple-personalities, please press 3, 4, 5 and 6.

If you are paranoid-delusional, we know who you are and what you want. Just stay on the line until we can trace the call.

If you are schizophrenic, listen carefully and a little voice will tell you which number to press.

If you are manic-depressive, it doesn't matter which number you press. No one will answer.

- Funny, Funny World

DAHLIA OF THE YEAR 2006



NOVA ELEWYN 282 BLCY

The Dahlia Society of Nova Scotia has chosen this lovely bright yellow ‘Laciniated’ type dahlia. It was grown from “NICOLA HIGGO” seed and was first planted in 1999. It’s known to have lots of blooms measuring 6 to 8 inches across. It grows to a height of 3½ to 4 feet. It was named for George and Ruth Graham’s granddaughter and was first exhibited in 2002. It has been a prize winner for various growers in several exhibitions ever since.

Stealthy Approach to Tying Dahlias

When I first started to grow dahlias I didn’t use stakes at all, but after picking up bushes loaded with blooms from the ground and having them smashed and coated in mud that first fall, I soon gained an application for the lowly dahlia stake. The next year the stakes, hockey sticks that had the blades broken, were driven in place, after all I am Canadian. It’s amazing how rapidly hardwood rots, but that’s another story. Now that I had the stakes, what was I going to tie the dahlia plants up with, I knew wire was not the answer as it would cut the stalks, well I live in a rural farming community, so the natural thing to use was baler twine. This was available from the local Co-Op store, easy to cut with a jack knife, soft enough not to cut the stalks and dirt cheap. That seemed to work well except the brown baler twine looked terrible even at a distance, so it was back to the drawing board. That winter was spent thinking about what material I could use that would look better than baler twine, and of course gathering more broken hockey sticks at the local arena. A friend of mine who worked at a

local woolen mill suggested I use a heavy material used by them for reinforcing seams on pants and tee shirts, and they had lots of scraps that you could buy for next to nothing. I hurried off to the mill and got me some, and it looked real good except that it was white, might as well use the old baler twine. Then I thought, why not dye it dark green so it wouldn't show, it's probably bad enough to have a man do the laundry but a dye job, well that was something else. I followed the directions and it seemed quite straight forward, add dye in water mix thoroughly allow material to soak, slosh it around a bit and then rinse, well my biggest mistake was doing all this in white pants. That season the new twine was put to use and everything seemed fine until the fall when the plants were big and we had a fair amount of rain and then some wind. I could not believe a piece of cotton when wet could stretch that far, my dahlia plants did not smash to the ground, they simply leaned over till they were parallel to the ground. Did you know dahlia tops will bend and grow in an entirely different direction just over night? My plants were now horizontal on the ground, about a foot high but still flowering, it was going to take some real skill to get these crooked stems hidden at the upcoming show. I think the judges gave me a third just out of pity. The following winter when I wasn't gathering more hockey sticks I kept thinking about tying material, then a friend who did handcrafts gave me a piece of nylon material used to hook rugs. I tried to break it, I stretched it both wet and dry and it barely moved, so the decision was made to try it come spring. It is a product called "Nylotex" and is a narrow strip of 100% nylon material that is sold in large balls. It seems that Wal-Mart is the only store to carry it. Very soft and comes in many colors, I started out using green as that seemed the most appropriate color to use, green on green should not be seen. But I soon discovered that was not the case. Now, here comes the stealth part of the story. After last years National Show in Nova Scotia I heard and saw in print that many of our visitors thought that we did not have our dahlias tied up at all. Well the truth is, yes, they were tied but the twine was very hard to see even up close. The key here is to use dark colors, very dark blue or purple, dark brown, or black. The dark colors blend into the inner shadows of the plants and can not be seen very easily. Even when cutting plants down after a frost, it is hard to see the tying material. Stealth technology has finally come to the dahlia patch. If only we could hide the bug damage just as easily.

Arthur Haskins

History of the Dahlia Society of Nova Scotia

Dahlias have always been popular in Nova Scotia gardens and the old standard decorative types in solid colors of red, pink or yellow have been handed down through many generations across the province like cherished heirlooms. In time, some gardeners began to specialize in dahlias and started to import more showy cultivars from Europe or the United States. Dahlia personalities like Percy Wallace and Wilfred Armstrong of Dartmouth, Ken Coudrey of Halifax and Harry Townsend of Truro spearheaded the promotion of the Dahlia, bringing beautiful dahlias in new colors, sizes and flower forms to every Garden Club and Exhibition Flower Show they could. Quickly the public began to take notice, and the Dahlia became one of the most popular features of our September Flower Shows. Percy Wallace in the late 50s' started his own commercial dahlia business in Dartmouth and attracted huge crowds to his "Open House" every fall. It was people like Ken Coudrey, who carried the torch for many years and was one of the main architects along with Arthur Haskins and Vern Fraser in the establishment of the Dahlia Society of Nova Scotia.

January 23rd 1985 a small group of enthusiastic dahlia growers met at Oxford Street School in Halifax and decided to form the "Dahlia Society of Nova Scotia". Ten members were present and the first executive elected were: President - Arthur Haskins, Vice-Pres - Vern Fraser, Sect/Treasurer - Cecil Dexter. Others present were Arleen Britten, Marjorie Fowler, Carol Dexter, Ed and Sylvia Alley, Jim Morrow and Ken Coudrey. Annual dues were set at \$5 Single/\$7 Family. Our own Dahlia Newsletter was started with Arthur Haskins as editor and he was succeeded by Nina Dandurand, then Barry MacKenzie and then David Steele. To promote dahlias, that

fall the newly formed society held a dahlia display at the Bayers Road Shopping Center and began signing up new members, by promotions like this and word of mouth the membership grew steadily.

The next spring to help gain more exposure for the dahlia the society donated 150 newer cultivars to the Halifax Public Gardens to replace their old stock. That fall we held another display of blooms at the Mic Mac Mall and found that we could sell the blooms after the display and made \$97.00. In August, members George and Ruth Graham made baskets of dahlias to decorate a float for the Blueberry Festival Parade held in Dean. A week later, member Ross Cameron filled the back of his small pickup with dahlia blooms and displayed them in the Economy Clam Festival Parade, and later gave the blooms away to the public. That same fall a lapel button was designed and made with a shovel on it that read, "I DIG DAHLIAS".

In 1988 as a fund raiser we decided to have a spring dahlia tuber sale to the public, our first efforts netted us \$280.00 and it continues to this day and is the main fund raiser of the society. Later that year in July we held our first club picnic at the home of George and Ruth Graham in Dean. They continued to host this event for a numbers of years before we changed venues and met at the home of Eric and Joyce Higgins. We were especially busy in 1988 as we held two dahlia displays on the same date in different locations, one in Bridgewater and the other in Sydney, a number of new members were signed up especially in Cape Breton and the 800 dahlia blooms on display attracted a lot of attention. That fall Marjorie Fowler presented the Dahlia Society with a wooden gavel made by a local dahlia grower, Capt. Carroll.

In 1989 we took on a new and exciting project, the "Flowers of the Atlantic". This was a very large flower show and horticultural trade show held at the Halifax Metro Center and the major Horticultural Societies were asked to participate, and we were one of the largest exhibitors. Our growers made a major impact and dahlias were front and center as the public viewed the show. Unfortunately, not enough of the public viewed the show because the next year the show was discontinued. Meanwhile, that same year George and Ruth Graham convinced the Halifax County Exhibition to expand their dahlia classes and to give the dahlia display a separate space. The display grew from 5 entries to over 129 in just a few years of the changes and to this day is a major draw at the exhibitions flower show.

The society continued to draw in new members and the membership climbed to over 100 scattered throughout the province and in several other provinces. After talking about it for a few years, in 1993 the Dahlia Society of Nova Scotia decided to make a bid to host the American Dahlia Society National Show and Conference. Arthur Haskins carried our bid to the National Show held that year in Birmingham, Alabama and was successful in securing the next available show date 1997. Our tuber sales were making us over \$2000.00 each year now and we began to build up a reserve fund to host the National Show. In 1994 we held our first dahlia show using ADS rules and classification. The show was held in the Mic Mac Mall and the best entry in show was "Harriet Collins" entered by Joe LaPierre. After two dahlia shows in the Mic Mac Mall it was decided to move to the Bedford Place Mall that had more space. We have remained at the Bedford Place Mall except for the two years we held National Shows. We moved our meeting to Windsor Park to a new facility there.

In 1997 the Dahlia Society hosted the American Dahlia Society National Show in Halifax at the Sheraton Hotel. The show was a big success with many visitors coming from the United States and other parts of Canada. The large ball room was full of bloom, over 1600 of them and everyone had a great time. In fact it was so much fun that within two years we decided to bid to host another National Show for 2005. Members continued to promote dahlias over the next few years and a few even traveled to the National Shows in Washington DC, Long Island New York, and Ohio with dahlia blooms. The dahlia is front and center at many flower shows and exhibitions throughout the province thanks to the tireless efforts of our members, and the dahlia gospel is being spread by a number of our members who speak to different groups about growing this wonderful flower.

In 2005 we hosted the American Dahlia Society National Show for the second time in eight years. This time we were headquartered at the Westin Nova Scotian Hotel and it was an excellent choice. The show was a success, over 2000 blooms filled the ballroom and everyone enjoyed themselves and we were treated to some great weather to take in the tours and gardens.

To begin our twenty-first year we decided to change our meeting place to the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History on Summer Street in Halifax. The Dahlia Society of Nova Scotia continues to promote the “Dahlia” and continues to evolve with a mixture of small and large growers, experienced and new to the game, with varying interest such as garden display, cut flower and blooms for showing. The goal remains the same A grow and enjoy this wonderful flower not only with yourself, but with others.

The following abstract is from the DSNS 2006 Show Schedule, which is different than the 2005 Schedule:

SECTION TWENTY-THREE ARRANGEMENT OR COMPOSITION

Note: Dahlias should be the predominant flower. Dahlias used in this section Do Not have to be grown by the exhibitor. The Dahlia Society is not responsible for loss or damage of any exhibit.

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| (A) ‘ <i>Oriental Simplicity</i> ’ | <i>Oriental style arrangement or composition</i> |
| (B) ‘ <i>Parade Day</i> ’ | <i>An arrangement or composition, of many bright colours.</i> |
| (C) ‘ <i>Sea Adventures</i> ’ | <i>An arrangement or composition of our marine heritage.</i> |
| (D) ‘ <i>Take 5</i> ’ | <i>An arrangement or composition suggesting garden leisure.</i> |
| (E) ‘ <i>Company Coming</i> ’ | <i>Centrepiece using pompom dahlias.</i> |
| (F) ‘ <i>Split Personalities</i> ’ | <i>An arrangement or composition using laciniated dahlias.</i> |
| (G) ‘ <i>Please Yourself</i> ’ | <i>Use Your Imagination.</i> |

SECTION THIRTY- FLOATING DAHLIA

SINGLE DAHLIA BLOOM WITH A VERY SHORT STEM FLOATING FACE UP IN A SHALLOW DISH - JUDGED ON QUALITY AND BEAUTY OF THE DISPLAY

How to Make Sense of a Fertilizer Label

You want to make sure your plants are getting the nutrition they need to do you proud, but there are so many choices when it comes to selecting fertilizer. How do you know what is really in the bag? There are certain rules that all fertilizer makers must follow when they label their products and understanding these rules can make comparing fertilizers much easier.

Here's How:

1. Major Ingredients: Most commercial fertilizers have 3 numbers on the front label, separated by dashes. For example: 5-10-5. This is the fertilizer analysis or percentage by weight of the 3 major nutrients plants need: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, in that order. These are abbreviated as N-P-K.

So if you purchased a 10 pound bag of fertilizer labeled 5-10-5, it would contain 5% nitrogen, 10% phosphorus and 5% potassium. The remaining 80% could be comprised of other nutrients and **filler**.

2. 1st Number - Nitrogen: The first number gives the concentration of nitrogen in the product. Nitrogen encourages foliage growth, among other benefits. A 5-10-5 fertilizer would contain 5% nitrogen by weight. So for every pound of fertilizer applied there is really only .05 pounds of nitrogen. (The 10 pound bag mentioned above would contain .5 lb. nitrogen.)

3. 2nd Number - Phosphorous: The middle number refers to the concentration of phosphorous. Phosphorous contributes to many fundamental plant processes such as rooting and setting flower buds. A 5-10-5 fertilizer would contain 10% phosphorous by weight or .1 pounds of phosphorous. (The 10 pound bag mentioned above would contain 1 lb. of phosphorus.)

4. 3rd Number - Potassium: The final number states the concentration of potassium. Potassium contributes to the overall health and vigor of plants. Again, a 5-10-5 fertilizer would contain 5% potassium by weight or .05 pounds of potassium. (The 10 pound bag mentioned above would contain .5 lb. potassium.)

5. Complete Fertilizers: Fertilizers that contain all three major nutrients are considered complete fertilizers. There are specialized fertilizers which are called incomplete because they lack one or more major nutrients such as a fertilizer labeled 0-20-20.

6. Fertilizer Ratio (An easier comparison): An easier way to compare the numbers is to break them down to the fertilizer ratio or the amounts of the 3 major nutrients in relation to each other. A 5-10-5 fertilizer has a ratio of 1-2-1. This becomes important when looking for a fertilizer for a specific need. A 1-2-1 ratio is often recommended for vegetables, which need plenty of phosphorous to set fruit. 1-2-1 could be 5-10-5, 10-20-10 or any similar extrapolation.

7. Other Ingredients: Any additional ingredients will be listed on the side label. This may include other nutrients like calcium, magnesium, iron, micronutrients and even the percentage of organic matter.

8. Organic fertilizers: Organic fertilizers must specify which nutrient(s) is organic and it must be identified as either synthetic and/or natural, by percentage. For example: 20% of Nitrogen organic (6% synthetic, 14% organic). When a fertilizer is labeled "organic", it simply means it contain carbon atoms. It can be naturally produced from plant or animal tissue or synthetically manufactured.

Tips:

1. Having a soil test done before you start adding amendments will tell you what you actually need. If your soil pH is too high or too low, your plants will not be able to access some nutrients, even if they are present in the soil.
2. There is no one size fits all fertilizer. Fertilizer choice depends on the type of plant being grown and the soil it is being grown in.
3. Always follow the label instructions when using any registered garden product. Just because a little is good, it doesn't follow that a lot is better.
4. You can use less of fertilizers with high analysis numbers than with lower numbers. Five pounds of 10-20-10 would give you the same nutrient value as 10 pounds of 5-10-5.
5. Organic fertilizers made from natural ingredients often have lower concentrations of the three major nutrients, so you will need to use larger amounts. However, they do contain many other nutrients that feed both the plant and the soil. If you are using a synthetic fertilizer, you should supplement with some type of organic matter such as compost or manure, to maintain soil health.

Inspired by Jack O'Neil's

submission

DAHLIA SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA: New Member/Membership Renewal Form
DSNS dues are \$5.00 single and \$7.00 for family in Canadian funds, per year.

Name _____
Address _____ APT _____
City/Town _____
Province/State _____
Country _____
Postal Code/Zip Code _____
Phone and or E-Mail _____
Single: (\$5.00) _____ Family: (\$7.00) _____

Make check payable to the: DAHLIA SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA

Mail to: David Steele
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Nova Scotia, B0P 1H0