



# Vancouver Dahlia Society

*Promoting Dahlia Growing Since 1955*

April - May 2016

Bulletin 3

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's planting time! Usually we say you should not plant before the beginning of May. However, because we have had an unusually warm winter, we are about 4 weeks early. A good indicator is to watch for the lilacs to bloom and at the time of this writing (April 12), my lilacs are just beginning to bloom.

When I first started growing dahlias, I would just dig a hole, throw in the tuber, cover it and hope for the best. Because I was so enthusiastic, I would always plant them too early and then would have to wait a long time before the shoot would break the surface. About 10 -20% would refuse to grow, having succumbed to the wet and cold, become insect fodder or were simply inferior tubers and I would be left with spaces in my rows.

My next approach was to start the tubers in pots. I would start them indoors in a bright window, under grow lights or in the greenhouse. When it was time to plant them out, they would have to be hardened off; gradually acclimated to the outside. So much fuss and bother!

I have recently come up with a new method that works really well for me, without all the fuss. About three weeks before planting, I put the tubers in trays, laying them flat and side by side. I cover them lightly with slightly moist soil. The trays are placed outside in a warm, sunny and sheltered spot. When the shoots break the surface, it is time to plant, as you do not want the roots to grow so much that they become tangled. By this time the ground will be warm enough and they will continue growing vigorously. I plant only the most vigorous tubers. The lazy ones can be given away or discarded and the tubers that don't eye up can be thrown away. This results in a healthy row of plants with not empty spaces.

As the plant begins to grow, occasionally the tuber will send up more than one shoot. Pinch off the extra ones and leave only one. This will give you one strong central stem, rather than several weak stems. When the shoot has put out two, three or four sets of true leaves (ignore the first semi leaf), pinch the center. For plants with larger blooms, leave less room for side branches and for smaller blooms, leave room for more side branches. If you cannot bear to discard the extra shoots or the tuber is a particularly valuable one, stick the shoot in the ground beside the parent tuber and it will form a new plant, resulting in another clump of tubers. At first the shoot will look wilted and almost dead but if you are patient, it will perk up again. I have never yet had a shoot planted that way that did not grow.

At the May general meeting we will have Catherine Dale speak to us about soil and compost. She is a professor at a local college and this is her specialty. She will bring some compost tea to share with us, so bring your jugs and take some home.

At the June general meeting we will hear from Connie Young-Davis. She is a grower from Victoria who has had tremendous success at the shows. She often takes ½ or more of the head table. I have often wondered how she manages to grow such spectacular blooms and maybe she will share some of her secrets with us. (I have heard that she is completely ruthless in discarding inferior stock and blooms.) Perhaps she will also share with us how she manages to transport so many blooms in undamaged condition in a relatively small space.

In conclusion, let me give out a great big thank you to the tuber sale committee: Carole, Tina and Norm and all the volunteers that made the tuber sale such a success. A big thank you also to all the sellers without whom the sale would not be possible. We had some new sellers this year, even three from as far away as Nanaimo. We are set financially again and ready to take on the year.

**Peter Krueger**

### **Next Meetings: April 20th and May 18th**

The VDS meets on the 3rd Wednesday of every month, except November, December and January in the Floral Hall at VanDusen Botanical Gardens at 7:30 pm.

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

April 16  
Fraser Valley Dahlia Society  
Tuber Sale  
George Preston Rec. Centre  
Langley, BC

May 1  
Burnaby Rhododendron Festival  
Shadbolt Centre For The Arts  
Burnaby, B.C.

July 23  
Federation Summer Workshop  
Seattle , WA

July 30  
Judges Training  
Mt. Vernon Washington

September 3 & 4  
Vancouver Dahlia Society  
Annual Dahlia Show

September 10 & 11  
Whatcom County Dahlia Society  
Annual Dahlia Show

September 17 & 18  
Fraser Valley Dahlia Society  
Annual Show

**Welcome New Members**

Elsa Foli  
Grace Moore  
Otto & Sheila Wetzlmayr  
Natalie Sumiyoshi

**The April 16th Meeting Will Feature Our Tuber Auction**

You may be able to pick up a new introduction or hard to get variety. If you have anything you would like to donate, see Carole Rollie.



**MAY 18th MEETING AGENDA**

Catherine Dale will give a talk on soil and compost. She will tell us all about compost tea and will have samples so bring along a jug. I'm sure there will be a limited supply.

**Please attend these meetings and support the speakers!**

**BUY AND SELL**

Do you have something you would to buy or sell or even give away for free. It doesn't necessarily have to be dahlia oriented. Send me a small ad and I will post it in the bulletin. If you have a photo of the item send that as well. Tina McNabb themcnabbs@telus.net

**1979 - 2016 COMPOSITE LISTING OF DAHLIAS**

The new composite listings book of all dahlias listed between 1976 through 2016 in the ADS Classification Handbook is out. I will try and have copies for sale at the May general meeting. They will sell for \$10.00 each. Please let me know at the April meeting if you would to have one.

Tina McNabb

**DOOR PRIZES**

Everyone looks forward to the door prizes that we award each month at the end of the general meeting. Door prizes do not have to be new, they can be just about anything - cuttings from your garden, extra produce, a "re-gift" or homemade treasures. Names are randomly picked from those who have signed in at the beginning of the meeting and each person chooses their door prize in order of winning. Everyone appreciates contributions to the door prizes. Please bring in anything that you would like to share with the club.

**TUBER SALE RESULTS FOR 2016**

YEAR	GROSS SALES	CLUB PORTION
2016	\$10,754.00	\$5,439.95
2015	\$11,085.00	\$5,678.50
2014	\$11,705.00	\$5,947.00

CREDIT CARD TRANSACTIONS

2016	58 TRANSACTIONS	NET SALES – \$2,478.95
2015	25 TRANSACTIONS	NET SALES – \$1,144.71

We would like to thank everyone involved in the sale for all of their hard work, especially the sellers. We also would like to say a special thanks to; Vern & Judy Stephens and Ed Johnston who came over from Nanaimo; Evelyn and Rada who dug up Arlene Brodie’s tubers; Vittorio who cut up and wintered the tubers so they could be donated to the club; and to Ed Thompson from the Whatcom County Dahlia Club who brought the cash registers and stayed and helped us.

Your Tuber Sale Chairpersons

Carole Rollie, Norm Sharp & Tina McNabb

**ANOTHER CHANCE TO BUY TUBERS**

If you could not make it to our sale, our club has a booth every year at the Burnaby Rhododendron Festival where we sell donated tubers. We have a limited supply so come early as we usually sell out. The festival will held on :  
 May 1,2016 starting at 10:00 at the Shadbolt Center for the Arts at 6450 Deer Lake Avenue, in Burnaby, just off Canada Way.  
 Drop in and say hi and maybe purchase a dahlia or two.



**The 50/50 DRAW**

Tickets are still 1 for a Looney - 3 for a Tooney and 10 for \$5.00

**REMINDER - Tickets will be on sale at each meeting only until 7:25 PM. Meeting starts at 7:30 PM. Please come early enough to purchase your tickets before the start of the meeting.**

**YUKKKK! I'VE BEEN SLIMED!** Copied from "The Garden Helper"

There's nothing worse than seeing that newly planted tuber's green sprout emerging from the soil one day and the next it is gone. Most likely a slug had devoured it as a midnight snack. Not to fear it will sprout again but in the meantime here is a little reading material on those slimy little critters.

**ALL ABOUT THE PRIVATE LIVES OF SLUGS AND SNAILS....**

Slugs may be a very serious problem to you if you live in the Northwest or other moisture laden areas of the country. A single lawn prawn can successfully remove an entire row of seedlings from your garden in no time at all. He can turn a perfect plant into swiss cheese over night and return to the safety of his hideaway, leaving you to wonder what the heck happened.....

As slugs wander about, doing their evil little slug deeds, they leave behind them a trail of slime which amounts to nothing less than a road sign for themselves and every other slug to follow to the grand feast.

To make the situation even worse, slugs are hermaphrodites, they each have both male and female reproductive systems.

Yep, these slimebags can uhh..... uhhhh....

make love with themselves, and in the privacy of their own abode, each he~she slug will literally single handedly produce two to three dozen ravenous offspring several times a year.

The egg clusters look like little piles of whitish jelly filled, 'BB' sized balls.

The eggs will begin to hatch in anywhere from 10 days to three weeks or longer, and these ugly sluglings are born with a ravenous appetite! They eat so much that they can mature from egg to adulthood in as little as six weeks.... and each one start their own families.

Destroy the eggs... whenever and wherever you find them! A good shake from your salt shaker will quickly do the job!

**ORGANIC METHOD TO CONTROL SLUGS**

- Fill a small bowl with stale beer. Put it in the areas where the slugs are active. Stale beer attracts the slugs and they drown.
- An early morning stroll around the garden, salt shaker in hand will often result in many casualties for the bad guys.
- Bait and destroy tactics work. Set a pile of slightly dampened dry dog food in an area frequented by slugs. In the morning and evening visit the feeding station a few times.... scoop them up and destroy!
- Try as you might, the war against slugs will go on as long as there are gardens. You will never win, but you can keep them under control. Remember that for every slug you destroy, you are preventing countless generations of that slug's offspring.
- Use strips of copper or copper wire around your garden.
- Use hollowed out fruit like oranges, grapefruit or cantaloupe and place them skin side up in the garden. Each morning you will find slugs underneath. Empty and destroy.

**SLUG BAIT AND POISON SAFETY**

At times, when the situation can not be resolved organically, it is fine to go ahead and use an appropriate chemical treatment... as long as you take any necessary steps to assure it is done safely!

It becomes your primary and sole responsibility when using chemical baits and poisons is make sure children, pets, small critters, good creatures are denied access to the poison. Commercial slug bait products can be purchased in the form of meal, pellets, powder, granules, liquid and gel. Each form requires different handling methods. Always read and follow the product's instructions to the letter!

Make traps to collect slugs out of plastic pop bottles. Cut the bottle in half and then invert the top part of the bottle into the bottom part to create a no escape entryway. The slug bait can be placed inside the bottle and will draw the slugs in where they will die and await disposal.

Cut a one inch 'V' notch in the rim of a cool whip bowl. Invert the bowl in the garden over the slug bait, and place a heavy enough rock on top of it to keep it secure.

At the very least, cover the bait with a weighted piece of wood or an old shingle to prevent access to the poison. Place a few 1-2" rocks under one edge of the board to hold it off the ground and the slugs will think this new 'cavern' is a cozy new Home Sweet Home.... WRONG!

Commercial, disposable slug traps may be purchased at many garden centers. Quite a bit more expensive, but they work.

**GROWING DAHLIAS IN CONTAINERS**

(taken from Wiki How To..)

Dahlias are bright, beautiful flowers that come in a wide variety of colours. Due to their height, however, many gardeners may feel skeptical about planting them in pots. Dahlias can thrive in pots as long as the container is large enough, but varieties that are three feet in height or taller may need additional support from stakes.

Select a variety of dahlia suited for container growing. Dwarf and low-growing varieties work best, but nearly any type can be grown if you have a large enough pot

Pick out a large pot. A good container to start with should be approximately 12 inches (30.5 cm) deep by 12 inches (30.5 cm) in diameter. Larger varieties may need even larger containers, however, especially if the flowers exceed 3 feet (0.91 m) in height.

Pick out a coarse potting mix. Standard potting soil alone is too porous and may lead to poor bud formation. A good potting mix includes both potting soil and garden soil, or potting soil and compost.

If starting the dahlias in pots that sit outdoors, wait until mid-April through all of May. If starting the flowers indoors, you can plant the tubers in early April.

Fill your container a third way full with your potting mix. Do not pack it tightly; allow the soil to remain loose.

If using a pot deeper than 12 inches, you may need to fill it with more soil. When all is said and done, dahlias need to be planted about 6 inches deep, and there should be an inch between the surface of the soil and the rim of the pot at the end of the potting process.

Mix a handful of bone meal and fertilizer into the soil. Dahlias require a lot of nutrients to thrive. Fish or seaweed fertilizer can provide additional micro nutrients, as well.

Plant the tuber in the soil. Lay it down horizontally and leave at least 1/4 inch space between the root end of the tuber and the side of the pot. If an eye has already developed, center the eye in the middle of the pot and allow it to face upward. The sprout will come through from this eye.

Insert a stake into the pot. Large dahlia varieties need extra support to prevent the stalks from breaking off. Use a four foot stake with most varieties. Metal works best due to its sturdiness. The base of the stake should touch the bottom of the pot, and the stake itself should be firmly held in place by the soil

Cover the dahlia tuber with pre-moistened soil. Do not bury the tuber at this time, however. Instead, cover it with a minimal amount of soil so that you may monitor its growth.

Allow any exposed eyes to remain above the soil. Lightly spritz the exposed surface of the tuber with just enough warm water to moisten the surface.

Add more soil as the stalk grows. Do so carefully to avoid damaging the stalk, since the stalk is still fairly fragile at this stage. Never cover the top set of leaves. Continue adding soil until only an inch of empty space remains between the top of the soil and the rim of the pot.

Place the pot in full sun. Dahlias grow best with six to eight hours of direct sunlight.

Water the tubers deeply once the stalk extends above the rim of the pot. Give them a thorough watering two or three times a week. Dahlias growing in hot, dry climates may need daily watering. Never allow the soil to get soggy, however.

Fertilize the flowers once every two weeks from June through September. Use a low nitrogen fertilizer, and avoiding over-feeding.

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If there's anything you would like see at a meeting, any ideas or comments you would like to put forth or something you would like to put in the bulletin, please don't hesitate to contact any one of the above listed people here. We are hear to listen.

**REFRESHMENT REMINDER**

**April Meeting**

Sandwiches: Susie Sziklai & Pat Ianson

Sweets: Rada Davy

Fruit/Veggies: Norm Sharp

**May Meeting**

Sandwiches: Need a Volunteer

Sweets: Ann Field

Fruit/Veggies: Dorothy Pitrie

**Please bring your own mug to cut cost of purchasing foam cups and to be environmentally friendly.**