



DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

CREEKSIDE GENEVEVE, B, FD,
BI , FLOWER OF THE YEAR

May 2006

WWW.DAHLIASOCIETYOFGEORGIA.ORG

THE MAY TUBER SALE

It is time for our second tuber sale after a great one last month. We thank everyone that came and bought tubers for their garden and most of them should be planted by now. Thanks to Paula Pinholster for being our auctioneer and to Frank McComb and John Mell for helping. We had a new feature this time and will use it

in the May sale and in future years. Using our Society computer we were able to flash pictures of most of the AA, A, and B sized dahlias on the screen as they were being auctioned. This was a



APRIL TUBER SALE

big hit with attendees giving everyone a look at the bloom each tuber will produce. This month we will have pictures in all size categories of dahlias flashed on the screen before the bidding process begins for each tuber. Come to the sale on the 15th and have a great time buying dahlia tubers that will grow in the Atlanta area. Growing guides will be available for everyone as will a list of tubers that will grow well in the Atlanta area.

2006 ANNUAL CALENDAR

- MAY TUBER SALE, MAY 15, ABG
- JUNE MEETING, JUNE 19, ABG
- JULY , ANNUAL PICNIC, JULY 29 AT DUNAWAY GARDENS IN NEWNAN, GA.
WWW.DUNAWAYGARDENS.COM
- AUGUST MEETING, AUG 21, ABG
- CAROLINAS DAHLIA SHOW UNC ABORETUM, ASHEVILLE-SEPT 9 & 10
- NATIONAL DAHLIA SOCIETY DAHLIA SHOW, LONG ISLAND, NY SEPTEMBER 14-17
- TENNESSEE DAHLIA SHOW, CHATTANOOGA TRADE & CONVENTION CENTER, CHATTANOOGA, SEP 23 & 24
- GEORGIA DAHLIA SHOW, ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN, ATLANTA, GA SEPT 30 & OCT 1
- ALABAMA DAHLIA SHOW, MCWANE SCIENCE CENTER, BIRMINGHAM, AL OCT 7
- GA NAT'L FAIR DAHLIA SHOW, PERRY, GA OCTOBER 11-13
- OCTOBER MEETING, MINI DAHLIA SHOW, OCT 16, ABG
- NOV MEETING, NOV 20, ABG
- CHRISTMAS PARTY— DEC, TBA

THE CALENDAR HAS ONE ADDITION.
THE LOCATION OF THE PICNIC.

MAY TUBER SALE

MONDAY , MAY 15,

7:30 pm

ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

EXHIBIT HALL

OPEN TO ALL DAHLIA LOVERS

MAY- DAHLIA PLANTING BEGINS

May is usually the first month in which to plant dahlia tubers or plants in the Atlanta and northern Georgia areas. Usually I recommend mid May as the start point because of the threat of late frost or at least cool soil temperatures. However, we again had a mild winter and this spring has been quite (CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

TOM & MARY EVANS
STONE MOUNTAIN,
GEORGIA

**WE ARE SO GLAD TO HAVE
YOU AS NEW MEMBERS OF
THE DAHLIA SOCIETY OF
GEORGIA.**

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

pleasant. The soil in my garden reached the desired 70 degrees about 2 weeks ago. The rains have been slightly below average so our garden soil can be worked without too much concern of compacting. At the same time the cool temperatures at night have been great for hardening off any plants or potted tubers. In years past my concern has been planting too early could lead to “dahlia disaster”; namely “over protected” plants or tubers, planted in damp and cool soil, would succumb to rot. Having said all that, let’s talk about planting dahlias.

If you’ve done your homework then you know that your beds should have already been prepared in a sunny location that will get **AT LEAST ½ DAY OF SUN**. They will not be in the lowest spot of the garden but instead, they will be where good drainage exists or you’ve already considered that and have provided for good drainage in some manner. **DAHLIAS DO NOT LIKE WET FEET!** Once summer sets in, dahlias will grow extremely

quickly and many can reach a height of between 3’ and 7’. You will need to provide some support system in order to keep the growth off of the ground. You can use anything as simple as a wooden or metal (rebar) stake or even a more elaborate devise such as a tomato cage. **SET YOUR STAKING SYSTEM BEFORE YOU PLANT THE DAHLIAS!** Stakes have been known to find and destroy planted dahlias. I speak from personal experience.

If you have already **IMPROVED THE SOIL IN YOUR PLANTING AREA WITH ANY NUMBER OF ENRICHING ORGANIC MATTER** then plant the dahlias in a hole about 3”- 4” deep. If you are planting tubers directly in the hole you do not need to add fertilizer at this time because the tuber supplies any needed food and most moisture. Gently refill the soil over the tuber while avoiding disturbing any young eyes or sprouts that have appeared on the tuber. Some growers only partially fill the hole initially, adding soil gradually as the plant begins to grow. If any eye or sprout has been knocked off, they will regenerate themselves quickly and continue to grow. In fact I will eliminate all but one or two eyes before planting tubers so the remaining eye(s) will get full advantage of food and water. You do not need to water at this time. The same method goes for any tubers you may have previously potted in order to begin

the “awakening process”. Gently tap the root /tuber mass out of the pot and place in the bottom of the hole. It is fine if any sprouts protrude above the top of the hole because that will provide you with an indication of the dahlia’s health. You should water in this root/tuber mass to help it get off to a quick start. A handful of slow release fertilizer at planting time, left on the surface, is a good step at this time. If you have created or acquired any dahlia plants then a small handful or less of fertilizer can be worked into the soil used to cover the base of the dahlia plant in the planting hole. Use a general, **(Cont on next page)**



JESSEE G BALL, PURPLE

THIS BEAUTIFUL BALL DAHLIA WILL BE AVAILABLE AT OUR **MAY TUBER SALE**



TARATAHI LILAC BB, IC, LB L/W

A BEAUTIFUL CACTUS DAHLIA

MEMBERS BRINGING TUBERS

Members please bring as many of your tubers as you can to the sale/auction on the 17th. We need as many tubers as we can get as we are expecting a large number of people for the sale.

If you haven't dug them yet now is the time to dig and divide them. I finished digging my tubers this week (latest ever) and they had lots of eyes showing which make them very easy to divide and get ready for the sale. Make sure you let them air dry for 24 hours before putting them away for the sale or for planting later. Also, put them in a warm room so more growing tips will pop out.

Those dahlias you bring to the sale must be **divided**, have at least **one visible growing tip**, must be **listed in the Dahlia Classification Book**, and **identified by name with the name written on the tuber or on a tag attached to the tuber**.

Please bring your tubers to the sale early so they can be organized properly for the auction and we can start on time. Please place your tubers AA, first, A next, B next, BB and so on down the tables.

We thank each of you in advance for sharing your tubers for the benefit of our society.

(cont from page 2) balanced fertilizer such as 8-8-8 or 12-12-12. As a precaution against

burning the new leaves **provide some type of cover over these plants for about 48 hours**. This protection will allow the young plants to adjust to their new settings with the minimum of damage. Here again the plant will provide you with a visual indicator of its overall health.

At this time let me make two suggestions. Hold back several tubers or plants to replace any that fail to make it. As is with any other flower, dahlias are subject to rot or other damage at various times throughout the growing season. Second, **as an experiment**, I challenge you to leave a plant or two or a started dahlia tuber or two in the pot. Plant the entire pot in the ground, covering to slightly over the top of the pot. Keep track of which ones are still in the pot. Experience has shown that there will be **no** discernable difference in the growth or bloom production of these plants and, in the case your garden is visited by tuber eating voles (photo below), the pot will stop these eating machines from feasting on your dahlia tubers.



VOLE

For the past several years we have grown all of our dahlias by leaving them in the pots and planting the pot directly in the ground. Our garden contained over 1000 dahlia plants. I believe we have had the very same number and quality of blooms and there are at least three advantages over dahlias planted directly into the garden soil. First, you will avoid any damage from burrowing moles and voles. They can not chew through the pots. Second, if the particular variety of dahlia is a poor tuber maker, you will find that they do make tubers if planted while still in the pot. Third, in the fall when the plants die back, those left in pots are easily pulled from the ground and are very easy to store. That way you can avoid all of the digging and mess associated with washing and storing clumps of tubers. If you chose not to dig and store, simply cover with 4" to 6" of mulch and the dahlias will survive winter and grow again next season.

One last warning- until your plants have grown to the width of a good sized pencil, you should inspect your newly emerging sprouts and plants daily if possible. At this stage



new tender growth is very inviting to cutworms (**photo above**). They come out at night and you might find that new

growth has been cut off at the surface. If that is the case, search the soil immediately around the damage. They are hard to spot so take your time. You stand a good chance of finding the culprit within the top inch of soil, within several inches of the damage. Two stout rocks, used as cymbals, will take care of your lowly nemesis. Some growers have been known to wrap aluminum foil around the lower couple of inches of new growth. It works.

Now, all the waiting is over. Begin planting your dahlias, get your hands dirty and your back sore. Rejoice that your passion is gardening.

BRIAN KILLINGSWORTH

DAHLIA PICTURES



WESTON SPANISH DANCER M, C, FLAME



ALLIE WHITE BB, ID, W DOES WELL IN THE SHADE



LUPIN SHELIA O, DP DP/W



CAMANO STIKE A, IC, DB Y/BR



HONKA O, Y Y/Y