



DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA NEWSLETTER

HILLTOP EMILY BB-SC-DB
2014 DUDLEY AWARD FOR B

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GILLY SIMMONS, THE QUINTESSENTIAL DAHLIA GROWER

Gilly Simmons of Anderson, SC passed away at his home just a few days before Christmas this past year. He was an outstanding teacher & basketball coach, a super grower of dahlias and an outstanding Christian man. He introduced many new dahlias during his dahlia life with the one below, **My Beverly, BB-LC-LB**, being his most successful and one of his most beautiful. Some other introductions include Allie White, Allie Yellow, Jess, My Cindy, Beverly Too, Tyler and Cindy Lou. Gilly served as president of the Georgia Society in 1980 & 1981. Before Gilly started growing dahlias he was a teacher and basketball coach. His basketball teams won state championships and he carried this excellence into his dahlia hobby



for 45 years. The following is a write up about Gilly when he was honored in 2010 at the National Dahlia Show in Chattanooga, TN for his growing and hybridizing contributions over the past years.

Gilly Simmons started growing dahlias in Anderson, South Carolina in 1961 with 12 tubers. The next year he purchased 40 "dinner plate" sized

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CALENDAR 2014

JANUARY 20

7:30 PM

REGULAR MEETING
ABG

FEBRUARY 17

7:30 PM

REGULAR MEETING
ABG

MARCH 17

7:30 PM

REGULAR MEETING

APRIL 21

7:30 PM

TUBER SALE
ABG

MAY 19

7:30 PM

TUBER SALE
ABG

JUNE 16

7:30 PM

REGULAR MEETING
ABG

at a dollar apiece from a well known grower and exhibitor from Spartanburg, SC. When he brought his blooms to the Dahlia Society of Georgia show for the first time in 1963, he was told they were too good for the novice grower division and he needed to show them in the Open Division. Even though he won numerous blue ribbons that first year, he failed to get any blooms on the Head Table. That would soon change. With mentoring assistance from two of Georgia's premier dahlia growers, Conrad Faust and Gene Boeke, Gilly rapidly developed his growing, exhibiting, and hybridizing skills.

Over the next 45 years, from his humble "less than one acre" backyard, came some of the best dahlias the world has or will ever see. Growing conditions for dahlias in Anderson, SC, are not ideal. In fact, they are downright harsh. Gilly often said, "No one would grow dahlias with the heat, droughts, floods, and insects I have to deal with." Even though he shared with and mentored countless growers in the area, most gave up after only a season or two. He himself often had to replant five or more times. "The plants would just burn up." He soon learned the fine art of propagation. From late winter to mid-summer, he filled his small greenhouse with thousands of dahlia cuttings. Some he gave away or donated to society plant sales, but all the others he and his wife, Beverly, planted, planted, and planted again until his yard was filled with dahlias.

After helping to found the Carolinas Dahlia Society in 1986 and to host the 26th annual American Dahlia Society National Show in Asheville, NC, in 1992, Gilly and Beverly were asked to join the Tennessee Dahlia Society in the mid 90's. As with any society, Tennessee was going through some rough times with declining membership. Gilly played a key role in reversing this trend. He not only donated countless dahlia tubers and cuttings for distribution to members, he also made numerous trips throughout the growing season to show new and old members alike how to grow prize winning dahlias. Some of his mentorees included Ted and Glenna Bonine, Ray Phillips, Les Wilkinson, Herb Pace, and Gary Arnold. All are still active growers and society members today.

For decades, Gilly unfailingly brought "buckets and buckets" of prize winning blooms to fairs and shows throughout the south. Fellow exhibitors often lined up to see his new introductions. Even though he sent many of his introductions to American Dahlia Society trial gardens, he most often entered them in their respective divisions. "Good enough to compete, good enough to win" was his mantra. And win they did. Of the varieties he eventually kept and disseminated, all won at least best in their class and went to the head table.

Holding offices in all three societies – Carolinas, Georgia, and Tennessee – as well as sitting on the Classification Committee of the American Dahlia Society, Gilly Simmons has been a driving force in the growing, hybridizing and showing of dahlias in the south and the world. We are proud to recognize Gilly Simmons for all his efforts on behalf of the dahlia.

JANUARY MEETING

Monday, January 20, 7:30 PM

Atlanta Botanical Garden

Basement Garden Classroom

Program: Viewing of American Dahlia Society DVD of new introductions for 2014. This will include all dahlias that scored at least 85 or better in the trial gardens or on bench evaluations during 2013.

NEW MEMBERS

PLEASE WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS TO OUR SOCIETY

THERESE & DAVID MAY

DECATUR, GEORGIA

**WE ARE SO GLAD YOU HAVE JOINED THE DAHLIA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA
WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AT OUR MEETINGS & FUNCTIONS**

2014 DUES

Membership dues are payable and we would like to encourage all members to either pay at the January meeting or send your dues **in this month** to our treasurer, Henry Everett. His address is 2690 Gleneagles Drive, Tucker, GA 30084. Dues this year are \$31 individual membership or \$34 family membership.

We would like for everyone to pay this month so we can get the dues into the ADS and so your name will be in the 2014 Membership Directory that we will be printing on February 1st. Your dues are for the calendar year.

DAHLIAS OF TODAY

We are planning to have the 2014 Dahlias of Today available for sale to the membership at the February meeting. This is the best dahlia publication available so make sure you get one as we will be ordering a smaller number of them this year. Please let me know by email or at the January meeting if you would like one this year. The cost will be \$8 per copy for members and \$10 for non-members plus any shipping costs. New members will receive a copy free as an incentive for your membership.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Christmas party this year was a lot of fun with great food to eat and a lovely home to enjoy the time of the year. A big thank you to Dave and Cheri Felton for hosting our party in their lovely, spacious home. We all had a great time. As always we had fun with the gift exchange. Thanks to everyone for coming.



PICTURES OF GILLY & BEVERLY



ALLIE WHITE BB-ID-W



