

The JUDGE's Corner

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I always have mixed emotions at the end of the season. It is pretty nice to be able just to harvest blooms as you wish without worrying about a pending show. The fall also usually brings out the best in my dahlia garden, including those first year seedlings that have been slow to bloom. On the other hand, all that digging and dividing can get old pretty quickly when the weather doesn't cooperate. In addition, spring is a long way away; how will we get our dahlia 'fix?' I have just the right answer for that one!

Get out that Guide to Judging Dahlias and set it next to the lounge chair or on the coffee table so that you can easily grab it every time you need some dahlia 'talk.' I sent our current DSO judges some information including a take-home test regarding the work we need to do this winter to maintain our accreditation. (If you didn't get it and/or you aren't on the DSO judge's list and would like to be, please email me as soon as possible!) Print the test that was included and set it next to the Manual. As I see it, much of the test is designed just to make sure you read the manual. You will need to spend some time working on the test this winter! Please let me know if you have any questions about the requalification process.

It is probably a good time to step back to review some of the basics of judging dahlias. One important issue is your attitude, or mindset, as you judge either by yourself or as part of a team. First, you need to be conscious of your own preferences and prejudices. We all like (or dislike!) some colors or forms more than others. If you are aware of your prejudices, you can ask yourself whether or not your prejudice is influencing your decision. If you are uncomfortable with your ability to 'neutralize' your prejudice,



you could rely more heavily on your teammates in the decision. I sometimes feel that I overcompensate for my prejudices and that, of course, is just as bad as favoring your prejudices. This is another good example of the positives of a team judging approach.

In a team judging environment, it is important that you not only listen to your teammates, but that you also hear their views. That is, do not use the time they are speaking to think about your own perspective; you need to hear (and respect) their inputs. You need to encourage the inputs of others on the team, particularly those with less experience and less self-confidence than you. You also need to steer the discussion toward principles and conclusions based on knowledge gleaned from the ADS basic judging tools: the Guide to Judging Dahlias, the Classification and Handbook of Dahlias, and the Seedling Score Sheet. A corollary to that is you need to argue your perspectives in the context of your knowledge of those publications. Thus, it is ok, even appropriate, to refer to the judging manual during the discussion, for example, if there is an unresolved difference of opinion. Once a consensus decision is achieved, it is important that you adopt that majority view and not continue to adhere to a minority opinion.



Finally, remember the sage counsel of our favorite mentor, Glenn Ruth, to have a good time and to learn something each time you judge!

Please take a look at the following table and make sure to identify what you need to do next summer to meet these requirements and those in the materials I sent you. We will probably need to schedule some 'extra' seedling judging sessions so that everyone can meet the requirements. Please also get to work on those judge's tests and get them to me as soon as possible so that they are complete before next summer! Thanks!

**Basic Requirements for Maintaining
AC and SR Judging Status**

1. Continue as an ADS member and show and judge at least four out of the preceding five years.
2. Judge in at least 8 ADS shows over those five years.
3. Judge at least 10 seedlings (Seedling Bench, Trial Garden, or special arrangement) over the five years
4. Attend a judging seminar at least every other year.
5. Complete the appropriate judge's test.
6. SR judges must also be prepared to judge in any class assigned them.

Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Ron