

The JUDGE's Corner

Ron Miner baronminer@aol.com

The determination and the evaluation of a seedling's form are almost certainly the most important steps in the process of scoring a seedling. First, determination of the best classification of the cultivar fundamentally affects how it will compete and, in some cases, whether it will achieve a passing score. Second, form is worth 28 percent of the score and a poor score for form will likely lead to a score under the required 85 percent.

This red seedling (like most seedlings you will encounter!) requires close and careful study to identify its best classification. Start at the equator of the bloom. What is the shape of the floret? Perhaps you will first notice that



many of their tips are revolute; that is, they curve to the back of the floret. Perhaps you will also notice that they are not flat in cross-section. If you were to pluck some and cut them in half, the cross-section would be curved and in some cases, even 'w' shaped. What do you notice about the arrangement of the florets on the bloom? Are they disciplined and regular or unruly and irregular? For the most part, the arrangement is irregular.

If you were now standing in the Trial Garden, discussing the classification of this entry with your team, you would probably have your Classification and Handbook of Dahlias in your hand checking on several definitions. I hope you are all now thinking 'Ah, yes, ID or SC?!' The question might be whether those slightly revolute tips are enough to qualify this seedling as SC. The

answer is 'no!' The ideal SC cultivar has florets that are involute for about half their length and fully involute (i.e., overlapping) for about one fourth their length. Further, that ideal SC cultivar has florets that are regular in arrangement and the ideal ID cultivar can have fully involute floret tips. Your conclusion, then, would be that this cultivar is informal decorative.

This orange seedling brings to mind a different pair of forms since the ray florets are partially involute. If they were flat, there would



be no question; the seedling would be formal decorative, FD.

Note, however, that the florets are involute; i.e., they roll upward toward the top of the floret.

You should, therefore, take another look at the definition of a ball.

Note in the definition that an ideal BA would have florets that are

fully involute (i.e., overlap) for more than half their length. Clearly this seedling does not have florets that are sufficiently involute to overlap.

Thus, you and your team correctly conclude that this seedling is FD.

Open-centered cultivars are easy, right? This one was entered on the seedling bench by Roland Verrone at the National Show last fall. Your first reaction, like mine, is probably that this is an orchid. Just look at those involute ray florets. Before we write O W/w in the classification and go ahead to

look for faults, take another, closer look at those ray florets. What the heck are those petaloids doing there?!

Orchids don't have petaloids; this must be a collarette! Actually there were two cultivars with this form entered at the show. They are Novelty, Open Centered cultivars commonly called



Orchettes. Roland named this one Verrone's Morning Star. It scored 85.15 at the National Show in Chattanooga.

Keep working on those judging tests! Thanks!