

# 2007 Dahlia Judging Seminar

August 11, 2007  
Cuyahoga County Fair  
Annual Dahlia Show

## Overview

- Emphasis on Show Judging
- Knowledge and Demeanor
- Attributes and their Values
- Priorities
- Examples from the Show
- Summary

## Sources of Information and Disclaimer

All of the material in this presentation is based on the 2002 ADS Publication, the “Guide to Judging Dahlias,” the 2007 version of the “Classification and Handbook of Dahlias (C&HD),” and the ADS Seedling Score Sheets. Be aware, however, that parts of the material reflect my interpretation of those publications. I have tried to mark all of those areas with an *asterisk (\*)* to underscore the fact that the information so marked is *my (REM - Ron Miner’s) interpretation*, not “official” ADS wisdom.

## Judging Scenarios

- Seedling Bench Evaluation
  - Quantitative score sheet assessment
  - Classification Required
  - Selected blooms, perhaps (probably!) from many
- Trial Garden Judging
  - Quantitative score sheet assessment
  - Classification Required
  - Plants, grown by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party
- Show Judging
  - Relative (De!)Merits
  - Discipline Required!

## Judging Self-Discipline for Small, Combined-class Shows\*

- Identify faults in competing entries
- Assess severity of the faults
- Estimate relative penalties of the faults
- Add up fault penalties
- Rank order entries based on relative penalties
- All for a single entry/class!!

## First Steps

- Items to Bring Along
  - Show schedule
  - C&HD; most recent and composite
  - Judging Manual
- Study Show Schedule
  - Combined classes?
  - Special show rules?
  - Court of Honor

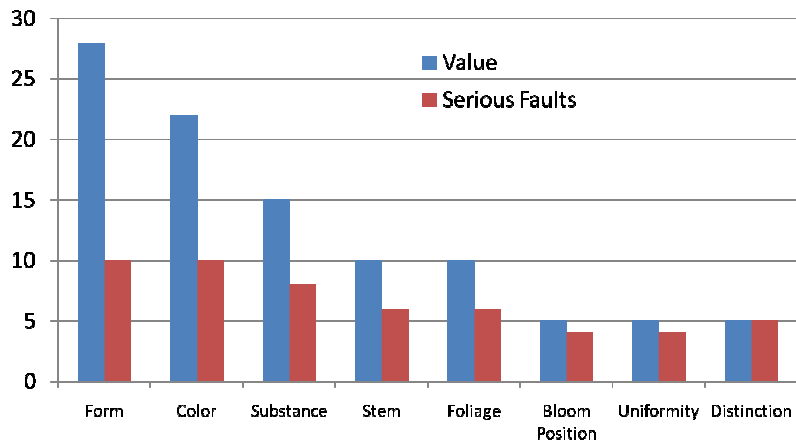
## First Steps, cont.

- Preview Show Entries
  - Overall Quality; good, great, outstanding?
  - Class Locations and Organization
  - Focus on Your Section if You Know It
  - Entries Properly Located? (Only if Time Permits!)
- Getting Started
  - Pay Careful Attention to Instructions
    - Policy with respect to insect damage, travel damage
    - Policy with respect to 1<sup>st</sup> prizes in small sections
  - Discuss Approach to Judging with Team

## First Steps, cont.

- Judging Mindset, Attitude
  - Set Aside Prejudices, Preferences, and Favorites
  - Depend on Knowledge Base
    - Guide to Judging Dahlias
    - Classification and Handbook of Dahlias
    - Seedling Score Sheet
  - Encourage Discussion Based on Knowledge
  - Listen Well; Respect Other's Inputs; Be Courteous
  - Disagree Based on Knowledge
  - Adopt the Majority View

## Dahlia Judging Attributes



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## A Few Lessons from the Chart

- Form, Color, and Substance are by far the most important attributes.
- Serious Form, Color, Substance, Stem, and Foliage Faults Have Values Greater than the Total Value of Bloom Position, Uniformity, and Distinction!
- In Show Judging, Take Care to Look First at Form, Color, and Substance!\*
- Use the Relative Values of the Attributes to Compare Faults between Entries.\*
- Avoid Overestimating the Importance of Bloom Position and the other Low-Value Attributes.\*

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## Form – General Considerations

- Circular, Symmetrical Outline
- Contour (Fully Double Blooms)
  - Circular Cross-sections
  - Small, Closed Center
  - Spiral Arrangement of Ray Florets
- Peak of Development
- True to Form
- Depth (Fully Double Blooms)

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## Form – General Considerations

Suggested\* Distribution of the 28 Points

Characteristic	Fully Double Cultivars	Open-Centered Cultivars
Symmetry	5	12*
Contour	5	NA
Development	5	7*
True to Form	5	9*
Depth	8	NA

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## Form – Symmetry

- Symmetrical, Circular Outline
  - Florets of equal length around the center of the bloom (No bearding (longer florets at bottom))
  - Similar spacing of florets at top and bottom of bloom
- Center Round and Tight on Fully Double Cultivars
- Bloom Centered on Stem
- Open-Centered Cultivars Should be Symmetrical in Each Characteristics (Ray floret length and spacing, disk florets, pollen-bearing florets, ...)

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## Form - Contour

- Fully Double Cultivars Only
- Round Cross-Sections in Each Plane above Center
- Slightly Flattened to Spherical Shape Transverse to Center
- Small, Closed Center Well-Proportioned to Bloom Size
- Developing Florets Spiral around Center
- Uniform Distribution of Ray Florets – No Gaps

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## Form - Development

- Blooms Should Be at their Peak of Development
  - Well-Developed Center
  - Good Depth
  - Subtle Signs of Faults Associated with Maturity to be Expected
- Fully Mature Bloom Should Prevail over an Immature Clean Bloom

## Form- True to Form

- “Ideal” Forms Described in C&HD and Guide to Judging Dahlias
  - Compare Observations to “Ideal”
  - Mountain-Top Analogy\*
- Judge as Most Recently Classified - Take Care in Combined Form Classes
- Penalize Mixed Form and Recognize Dilemmas
  - Formal Decorative vs. Ball, e.g.
  - Stellar vs. Formal Decorative, e.g.

## Open-Centered True to Form

- No Depth, No Contour – but still 28 points!
- Asymmetry or Deviation from Ideal Form are important, high penalty faults
- Peak of Development includes pollen development

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## Form – Depth in Fully Double Cultivars

Type	Depth
Waterlily	Less than $\frac{1}{2}$ Diameter
Incurved Cactus	$\frac{1}{2}$ Diameter
Stellar	$\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ Diameter
All Other Fully Double	$\frac{3}{4}$ Diameter; More is Better, but not $> 1/1$
Poms and Balls	Spherical

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## Color

- Color Classes (15) Are of Equal Merit
- Admixture of White:
  - Reduce intensity of color
  - Retains purity and clarity and merit
- Admixture of Gray:
  - Reduces the intensity, purity, clarity
  - Reduces the merit of the color

## Color - Merits

- Clear, Clean, Vibrant, Bright, Lustrous
- Sparkling, Silky Texture
- Uniform Color from Tip to Base of Ray Floret
- Conformance to Defining Characteristics  
Important for Blushes, Blends, Bicolors, and  
Variegated Cultivars

## Color - Blushes

- Judged in the Dominant Color Class
- Light, uniformly tinged coloration of florets
- Leniency is the rule in judging blushes in solid color classes
- White Classes
  - Blushes with Y, Pk, L may enhance color
  - Green blush is a negative

## Color - Blends

- Two or more colors apparent
  - Colors from different color classes
  - Colors distinguishable at 6 feet
- Light blends consist of lighter tones and tints of Pk, Y, L
- Dark blends include DR, P, etc.
- C&HD contains a specific list of colors for LB, DB, and Flames

## Color – Bicolors

- Distinct, sharp separation of colors differentiates bicolors from blends
- All florets should be uniformly marked
- Substantial region (1/6 to 1/4) of the floret should exhibit the second color
- Bleeding, self-colored florets are faults

## Color - Variegated

- Two or more distinct, sharply separated colors mixed across florets
- Substantial portion of each color
- Evenly distributed variegations better than large blotchy spots

## The Other Half

- Substance
- Stem
- Foliage
- Bloom Position
- Uniformity / Floriferousness
- Distinction

## Substance

- Floret Firmness, Stiffness, Springiness
- Positives
  - Thick, heavy ray florets devoid of coarseness
  - Crisp, firm ray florets, uniformly good to back
- Faults
  - Ray florets lost on the show table
  - Droopy condition, lacking springiness

## Stem

- Between Bloom and First Full Leaf (ves)
- Positives
  - Strong and straight
  - Length at least 1 X diameter for large blooms
  - Should meet the bloom squarely
- Faults
  - Too Long or Too Short, Crooked
  - Too Large or Too Small in Diameter

## Foliage

- Frames the Bloom
- Positives
  - Provides pleasing proportion to the entry
  - Good color, formation, texture, and substance
  - Nodes opposite and perpendicular to bloom
  - Equal patterns of leaves on each side of stalk
- Faults
  - Too large or too small, non-uniform
  - Folded, crinkled, injured, wilted, mildew, spray deposits, obvious insect damage

## Bloom Position

- Positives
  - About 45 degrees between bloom and stem
  - Top facing OK for WL, Ba, MBa, and P
- Faults
  - Down facing, serious fault
  - Side facing and top facing, less serious
  - Uniformity of position important in 3-bloom entries

## Floriferousness / Uniformity

- Basically not Relevant to Show Judging –  
Except in Multiple-Bloom Entries

## Distinction

- Generally an Attribute of a Cultivar, not a Bloom
- Generally not Relevant to Show Judging – Unless an Entry Literally Stands Out on the Bench

## Use Score Card Values to Prioritize Faults in Show Judging\*

- Use Seedling Attribute Values as a Framework to Judge Show Entries.
  - Begin evaluation with high value attributes.
  - Consider all attributes in evaluating an entry.
- Use Seedling Fault Values as a Basis for Comparing the Importance of Entry Faults.
  - Serious form and color faults outweigh grievous bloom position faults.
  - Even subtle form and color faults can outweigh many faults in “the other half.”

## Summary

- Cuyahoga Fair Show is a Challenge to Judge.
  - Combination of classes
  - Wide variety and range of faults on early blooms
- Discipline and Knowledge are Required to Judge this Show Well!
  - Know all attributes and their characteristics
  - Consider all attributes
  - Prioritize attributes and faults

## Summary, cont.

- Essential to Treat Each Judging Experience as a Learning Experience an Enjoyable Process!

## Examples from Show

- Open Questions and Discussion
- Examples that Illustrate Points