

Trial Garden Procedures and Rules of the American Dahlia Society

1. The American Dahlia Society (ADS) has established trial gardens located in various regions of the country for dahlia promotion, evaluation, and scoring of undissemated cultivars (using the current Guide to Judging Dahlias). Introducers or originators may select the trial garden(s) of their choice and send their prospective cultivar(s) for exposure and scoring. The American Dahlia Society has established the following rules in order to grow and evaluate all cultivars uniformly.
2. The location for a potential trial garden must offer accessibility to the public during daylight hours throughout the growing season. The chosen location should have fertile, well-drained soil with full sun for at least half the day, access to water, and some wind protection.
3. Upon satisfactory operation as a probationary trial garden for not fewer than two years and upon approval of the ADS Executive Board, ADS may establish a new trial garden. Growers may enter an undissemated cultivar in a probationary trial garden without charge and receive a score, understanding that scores of 85.0 or greater will not be listed in the classification book, receive a Trial Garden Certificate nor will ADS include the result in Derrill W. Hart or Evie Gullikson award averages.
4. A local dahlia society or consortium of societies must sponsor a trial garden. The society or consortium of local societies shall name a senior judge as the Trial Garden Director and name a committee of willing, capable, and competent members who also grow dahlias and reside in near proximity to the garden. The Executive Board and the Trial Garden Chairman must approve the Director of the Trial Garden. Changes in the Trial Garden personnel are subject to the approval of the Trial Garden Chairman.
5. The Trial Garden Director and society committee will follow good gardening practices, including tilling of the soil prior to planting, staking, fertilizing, tying, insect and disease control and maintenance of adequate moisture in the soil. The ADS has established the following rules so that similar conditions exist in each trial garden.
 - a. Fertilizer. The rate of application and kind of fertilizer will depend upon the nature of the soil, the amount of rainfall, and the rate of growth of the plants. A professional soil analysis will be made each two to three years to determine appropriate fertilizer practices.
 - b. Spacing of plants. The distance between plants shall be determined by the supervising committee and shall be sufficiently spaced to permit proper care of the plants, air circulation between each plant, and for convenience in judging.
 - c. Controls: Several standard varieties of dahlias should be placed around the trial plantings to serve as an experimental control for the conditions that exist in the garden.
 - d. Planting Date: Planting in the garden will commence depending upon the average frost-free date of the area and at the discretion of the Trial Garden Director. The Director and Committee should do their best to protect the plants from late frosts and other adverse weather whenever possible. Shading of the plants, however, during blooming is not appropriate.
 - e. Grouping of Sizes and Forms: Plant all "A" and "B" dahlias including Ball, all "BB" varieties, all miniatures, pompons, stellar, waterlily and all open-centered, such as singles, orchid flowering, anemone, etc. in respective groups, which promotes uniform treatment. Judges should not, however, be allowed to use the location of the plant as a key input to the determination of the classification of the entry.

f. Disbranching: Cultivars should be grown in a manner to achieve the bloom size suggested by the originator. Use the following guidelines: AA and A size, four laterals each plant; B size, five or six laterals each plant; BB, BA, ST, and WL size, six or eight laterals each plant. Disbud all of the above, removing secondary laterals (except replacements) in order to allow one bloom on each lateral. All pompons, miniatures and open-centered should be topped and disbudded but not disbranched beyond one or two pairs of leaves.

g. Deadheading: Remove blooms past their prime for judging from the plant, along with stem/stalk down to a replacement lateral.

h. Virused Entries: Remove any cultivar exhibiting signs of stunt or disease and destroy, using care to avoid infection of remaining stock. Notify the originator of stock destroyed.

i. Destruction of stock: At the end of the growing season, dig all clumps on which originators have requested return of tubers and destroy all others.

j. Confidentiality of Entries: The Director will create a confidential reporting list of all cultivars planted that identifies the originator, originator's classification, and assigned identification. Each entry in the Trial Garden will be tagged with this coded identification on the stakes of the entry and will be used by the judges when scoring. Neither the originator's name nor the name given to the cultivar nor its proposed classification will be divulged to anyone prior to the end of the judging season. Upon completion of judging, that information may be placed on the entry

6. Either originators or their agent may enter undisseminated cultivars, using the current official entry blank supplied by the American Dahlia Society, published annually in the ADS Bulletin, and available on the ADS website.

7. The Director of each Trial Garden will provide the Trial Garden Chairperson with the shipping information for his garden and the date that roots or plants should be sent for trial. The Trial Garden Chairperson shall prepare an article including that information for publication in the December Bulletin.

8. After confirming that space is available, an originator or designee shall send the Trial Garden Director three roots or plants of a cultivar. Originators shall have grown the cultivar for at least three previous years (i.e.: the entry should be sent to the trial garden in its fourth year or later). Each entry shall be undisseminated, not commercially available anywhere, and not listed in the Classification and Handbook of Dahlias. Originators will submit a trial garden entry fee and a picture of the entry. The entry fee is to be set by the ADS Executive Board and published in the December Bulletin. The Trial Garden Director will acknowledge receipt and condition of roots or plants prior to planting and as soon as possible if tubers or plants arrive in poor condition.

9. Introducers may request the return of all roots of their introduction(s) at the end of the growing season. This request must be submitted to the Trial Garden Director by September 1 in addition to the cost of postage and the established fee as determined by the Executive Board. If the Trial Garden does not provide return service, the Director should make that information available to originators at the time they make reservations.

10. Records: It shall be the duty of the Trial Garden Director or his agent to:

(a) measure the diameter and the depth of a suitable number of blooms at various times during the growing season in order to determine the size of the bloom;

(b) record the length and the character of the stem and the position of the flower on the stem;

(c) describe the color according to the current official ADS color standard;

(d) make notes on the growth habit of each plant including the characteristics of the foliage, stalk, and stem;

(e) arrange to have each entry evaluated and scored at least three times, with the majority of those evaluations to be supplied by a Senior Judge.

(f) record the first bloom date.

11. Judging: For a qualifying final score, at least three judges shall judge each entry, a majority of whom are Senior Judges.

(a) The sponsoring society of a trial garden shall encourage its members to manage the garden with good husbandry and pride, doing whatever it takes to show the garden in its finest array. The society will encourage its judges to judge the entries and promote this evaluation by providing judging seminars, picnics, etc. in order to entice wide participation from both its own and other society members who live within the general region of the garden.

(b) If it appears that a cultivar will score more than 80, judges should evaluate the entry a number of times throughout the season if at all possible. If an entry does not develop blooms worthy of scoring during the season, the defects should be noted on the report to the originator.

(c) Each Trial Garden Director shall establish a final date for judging cultivars. This date shall be such that the Director can complete a summary of all the results on all of the entries and send it to the Chairman of the ADS Trial Garden Committee by October 10 for compilation of scores, classification, and reconciliation with the Seedling Bench Evaluation Reports for the December issue of the Bulletin. The results will be provided to the Image Library Chair and the Website Coordinator for the website when they are finalized. Directors may continue to score entries after that date if conditions in the garden permit, but they shall not consider them when they determine the average score for an entry.

(d) The Trial Garden Director will record all scores with the name of the judge on the reporting list. The Director will compile an arithmetic average score. In compiling this score, the scores of Accredited Judges shall be averaged at half the weight of a Senior Judge as follows.

Average Score = (Sum of Sr. J. Scores + .5 X Sum of Ac. J. Scores) / (# of Sr. J. + .5 X # of Ac. J.). For example, consider SR1 @ 86, SR2@86 and AC1@81: $(86+86+40.5)/2.5 = 85$; or SR3@84, SR4@83 and AC2@90: $(84+83+45)/2.5 = 84.8$.

The Trial Garden Director shall have the responsibility to exclude from the averaging process scores that are obviously inconsistent with the quality of the entry. The Director may at his discretion use the scores of Honorary and Candidate Judges as AC scores in the determination of a final average if s/he can confirm that the score meets the immediately preceding requirement of reasonability and/or was developed in an appropriately supervised training process. If the number of AC judges is more than two times the number of SR judges, the Director may delete the lowest and highest of the AC scores in turn until the number of AC judge scores becomes fewer than or equal to twice the number of SR judges scores. Once the Director calculates the results, the Director shall not arbitrarily change the number; i.e., an average of 84.94 should be rounded down to 84.9 and an average of 84.96 should be rounded up to 85.0.

(e) Each Trial Garden Director will notify originators of the final average score and classification of their cultivars. If a cultivar was not scored, a brief explanation will be given.

(f) All cultivars that score 85 or more will be reported in the December Bulletin. If a cultivar is to be withheld for trial the second year, it is the responsibility of the originator to notify the Director of Trial Gardens and the

Classification Chairperson. Those entries will be noted in the December Bulletin as NOT FOR RELEASE. The cultivar's name will also have a two digit numeric prefix as designated by the originator.

(g) No variety is eligible for entry in the ADS Trial Gardens for more than two years, which shall be consecutive and if entered in the same Trial Garden the second year, the higher score will be certified.

(h) Entries scoring 85 or more points shall receive a Trial Garden Certificate.

(i) Originators or authorized agents must include the name(s) for their cultivar(s) at the time of entry. If the entry does not score, the name can be used for another entry. The name must be acceptable to the Chair of Classification, and if it is to be listed in the *Classification and Handbook of Dahlias*, the cultivar's name will not have a length of more than 22 characters.

(j) For cultivars that achieve a score of 85 or more in three or more Trial Gardens, A Derrill W. Hart medal will be awarded to the cultivar that has the highest average Trial Garden score as follows:

- AA (0001-0515) or A (1001-1515)
- B (2001-2515)
- BB (3001-3515)
- M (4001-4515)
- BA, MB, or P (6001-6215)
- ST (7001-7015) or NX (7601-7615)
- WL (7301-7315)

The highest 3 scores over 85 shall be used to determine the average. In the case of ties, duplicate awards will be made.

(k) For cultivars that achieve a score of 85 or more in three or more Trial Gardens, one Evie Gullikson medal will be awarded to the cultivar with the highest average three Trial Garden score among the following categories; PE, AN, NO, CO, O, OT, S, MS (8001-9715). All other rules in 11j apply to this award.

l. The receipt of a Derrill W. Hart medal or an Evie Gullikson Medal shall be construed as a pledge by the originator to introduce the variety in the year following. If the variety is not to be introduced, the medal shall be awarded to the next highest scoring cultivar that will be introduced into commerce. Any dahlia having scored 85 points or more at any one trial garden shall be considered a disseminated variety in the second year following its initial trial garden evaluation.

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