

Virus Results – Help – What’s Next?

Professor Pappu and his team at WSU are working hard to complete testing on the sets of samples provided by individual members and ADS clubs across the country. The results of the testing are distributed to the individuals and clubs as they become available.

At least some of the data sets show a disappointingly large portion of the samples with one or more of the six viruses examined. The 2015 test set from Ohio showed virus in less than 25% of the samples. The 2016 set of Ohio samples showed that about 80% of the samples had virus. There are three more sets of samples from NE Ohio in process at the moment. We are very early on the learning curve for understanding virus in our dahlia gardens.

The question that arises now is how to use the virus results. There are several bottom lines in which we have confidence.

1. The tubers from plants that test negative for all virus should be stored with great care and carefully tracked through the following year. Every advantage should be taken of those tubers next spring; e.g. using them for cuttings. (Remember to sterilize those cutting tools!)
2. Plants that looked very clean but tested positive for virus could be saved for next season. If you choose to do so, they should also be carefully tracked so that they can be monitored for the appearance of virus next season and tested again if an arrangement for virus testing in 2017 is put in place. Plants can have low levels of virus that can become more virulent in subsequent years.
3. Plants that show or showed clear signs of virus in their foliage should be thrown out.
4. Great care should be taken to avoid the possibility of transferring virus among plants during digging and dividing. Cutting tools should be sterilized in a 10% bleach solution before moving from one plant to the next.

We plan to summarize the results of all the tests performed on plants in 2016. Our target is to publish an analysis in the March, 2017 ADS Bulletin.

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