

STRATEGIC PLAN

Alli Richards stated she was asked to chair the 2024 ADS Strategic Plan committee. They started with the information that was brainstormed in the spring planning meeting in Denver. The ADS mission statement, "The American Dahlia Society is organized to promote and encourage the development and appreciation of the dahlia through educational and research activities and by supporting the local dahlia societies" guided them in developing the strategic plan. They set goals they wanted to achieve. The members were Alli Richards, Brad Freeman, Charles Miehm, Diane Reitan, Heather Ramsey, Jessica Becker, Mel Epstein, Sharon Swaney and Ron Miner.

The four key areas and their goals are the following.

- Technology – Improve the use of technologies to benefit the ADS as a whole as well as support for local societies. Recommend streamlining the membership process for ease of collecting, entering, managing data through creation of an ad hoc committee. Support of local societies through website design, zoom training and hardware recommendation and support as needed. They recognize different societies will have differing needs. Provide and highlight additional information on local societies on the ADS website. Online version of the *Bulletin* with links to other content such as society reports and use of an e-reader format for tablets. Update the process for obtaining photos for the "New Introduction" program. Develop a communication coordinator position. Create a directory of talent with the ADS membership (done).
- Education – Increase YouTube presence with program or webinars of interest to all growers – home gardeners, cut flower growers, exhibitors, and hybridizers. Create a book on the evolution of the various dahlia forms based on information from historical *Bulletins* and publications. Host webinars to help local societies with zoom meetings. Add dahlia modules similar to the judging modules. Create an ADS forum for society reps and presidents so they can meet together and discuss ideas.
- Brand Identity – Ad hoc committee to make recommendations to the board developing a brand guide to be used in developing a brand. Sell merchandise with the ADS logo, after we have the brand guide and logo established before moving forward. Adopt the use of a standard email signature line for all ADS board members.
- Research – Program coordinator position to be created for gathering of data, analysis of data and preparation of articles for the *Bulletin* and website. Develop a citizen science program to research and learn about various aspects of dahlia culture, such as fertilization, micronutrients, watering, seed storage, tuber storage, vase life, mycorrhizae.

Now the real work starts but we have completed one item and have three that are on the agenda for this weekend's meeting. There was discussion about the various recommendations. It is important that any information we put out on YouTube or social media is accurate and of good quality. The next step would be to adopt the

strategic plan and have smaller groups work on priorities for the key areas. Mel Epstein presented information about how to monetize YouTube videos. There was discussion about the YouTube videos and whether we should monetize them. The strategic plan is a road map for the organization for the next three to five years. There is a lot of work ahead, **Terry Schroeder moved, and Alan Fisher seconded to adopt the strategic plan. The motion carried.** Brad asked people to identify their top items of interest:

- Managing databases.
- Attracting various types of growers.
- Focus on the goals of the various forms of communication within the ADS.
- Move to Google Groups instead of GroupVine.
- Citizen Science.
- Help for local societies.
- Membership database/managing membership.
- Connection with the local societies – monthly communication to ADS Presidents/Reps.
- Develop an all-encompassing calendar with deadlines.
- Need to get the ADS Reps more involved – Forum for ADS Reps, meeting on a regular basis.
- Two-way communication between the ADS board and local societies.
- Information about what the positions entail, such as ADS reps and judging chairs so the local societies feel these positions are important.
- Could the ADS reps communicate more with their Regional Vice-Presidents to gain information about what is going on with the ADS. Regional Vice-Presidents should feed information to their ADS reps about board meetings.
- The value of an ADS membership to the members; fellowship of other ADS members.
- Need to make sure we are able to use technology resources adequately.
- Be sure new members receive a welcome letter; make ADS welcoming to new people.

COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR

Sharon Swaney states it is necessary to improve the communication process in order to better serve our membership. She feels a communication coordinator would be able to respond better to the communication needs of the ADS. The communication coordinator could send information to E-subscribers, mass emails to members and provide communication to members and the outside world. Sharon will still put the information on the website but the communication coordinator can send out the emails. There are emails received by the president or other board members that can be easily answered by a communication coordinator. **Alli Richards moved, and Alan Fisher seconded to create a communication coordinator position, working under the webmaster at least initially. The motion carries.** There is a draft of the job description. It is felt that Sharon and Brad could go through the results of the talent survey and find a couple of people to ask if they would be interested in this position.

IMAGE LIBRARY IMPROVEMENTS

Heather Ramsay would like to improve the photo standards for images placed in the New Introductions video.

- More access to trial garden photos even those that don't score in a trial garden, as they may score in another trial garden.
- Identify some photographers who are willing to help take photos.
- Use a Google form to submit images so all the information is included.
- The new introduction video needs a new name. Some thoughts were:
 - Best of the ADS trial garden/seedling bench
 - "Year" Introductions, e.g., 2025 Introductions
 - Best of Year (2025 e.g.)

MARKET BUNCH COMPETITION

The cut flower committee has produced a market bunch competition proposal. Below is the proposal. Wayne Lobaugh feels that he has over 600 cut flower hobbyists ordering from him. They are driving the market right now. We are trying to integrate these hobbyists into the ADS and some of our activities. It is felt if we offer them a category where they can show they may become more involved in showing in the horticultural division. We would like this to be on the website so that if a society wants to offer this in their society's show, they can use it to have a competition specific to cut flowers. Some of the items do not follow the regular show standards. For example, in the color the standards are different than what is the standard in a local dahlia society show. These standards for the market bunch competition are set to highlight the whole bunch/arrangement instead of attracting a single flower. The committee tried to develop rules and a scoring system, such as is used for baskets and vases. They are trying to represent what a flower bunch would look like at a farmer's market. This can be educational to those new people trying to get into the cut flower business. Wayne went over the rules and the score card, which are shown below. They have discussed making a video of judging a market bunch to show the various qualities of a market bunch. Local societies could train judges specifically on judging this market bunch competition. The video most likely won't be available before this year's dahlia shows. There are a couple that are looking at trying this category in one of their shows. The DSO is planning to do it at their small show and a society in California is planning to add one as well. ADS does not dictate what a local society offers in their shows. Take the information back to your local society and if you have any feedback, get it to the cut flower committee.

Farmer's Market Bunch

Description: A "farmer's market bunch" typically refers to a bundle or arrangement of freshly cut flowers sold by local farmers or growers at a farmer's market. Farmer's market bunches are prized for their freshness, seasonal variety, and often for their sustainability and support of local agriculture. This category will focus specifically on these bunches utilizing dahlias.

Objective: Evaluate the freshness of the blooms with scores that rank marketability and favor good grower management for a commonly found market item.

Judges will be evaluating the following:

Marketability: This bunch needs to arrive in a quality condition, as good as or better than, acceptable market standards with a customer focus.

Grower Management: The grower's ability and skill to produce a healthy plant and process cut stems to maintain quality and freshness.

Color:

- It is ok for blooms to have even and uneven distribution of colors.
- Muted, Muddy (brown), Vintage & Blends are ok.
- Blends do not need to have even distribution.
- Variegated varieties are allowed to have uneven distribution.
- It is ok for Bicolors to have bleeding and uneven distribution. They may also have solid and bicolored ray florets.

Categories:

- Can either be single color/variety bunches or a mixed bunch category. (would recommend these be judged separately)
- Can be a single variety or multiple varieties. (would recommend these be judged separately)
- Can be either a 5 stem or 10 stem bunch (would recommend these be judged separately)

Guidance for the Judges

- Judges will need to pick up and handle bunches to evaluate characteristics.
- No crushed leaves and petals on blooms. There may or may not be leaves, however if they do have leaves they need to be outside of the water.
- No crushed or torn cut-ends of stem
- Buds are fine as long as they aren't wilting/drooping

Rules

1. Use of wire and artificial means of supporting stems and/or blooms will disqualify entry.
2. Minimum stem length of 16".
3. Bound with one rubber band at bottom for security.
4. No wrapping.
5. No additional foliage.
6. Must be placed in a clear container.
7. If it's one variety, please place that on the show tag. If it's mixed, please note that it's mixed or unknown.

8. It is up to the club's discretion as to how many entries per person may be entered.

Cut Flower Score Card

Color.....25

(It is ok for blooms to have even and uneven distribution of colors. Muted, Muddy (brown), Vintage & Blends are ok. Blends do not need to have even distribution. Variegated varieties are allowed to have uneven distribution. It is ok for Bicolors to have bleeding and uneven distribution. They may also have solid and bicolored ray florets. Must be appealing & useful (as in a color that will sell in bouquets).)

Stem Quality

Firm blossom attachment.....20

Firmness & Integrity.....10

(Blooms are not bruised or crushed. Stems should be strong with a stem that doesn't arch and is not weak. Stems aren't too large in diameter. The cut edge is clean, fresh, and straight.)

Stem length (min 16").....10

(long strong straight stems preferred)

Freshness

Condition of petals.....15

(lack of damage and good moisture content, no shedding petals)

Harvested at appropriate stage.....10

(appropriate stage is slightly immature, young, and still developing, no pollen present, green centers ok)

Uniformity of age of blooms.....10

(Blooms should be relatively the same maturation stage.)

Garden Dahlias

Alan Fisher stated the garden dahlia committee is trying to reach people not historically reached through the ADS. They are trying to reach gardeners and flower lovers. The first thing to determine is what constitutes a garden flower. Some of the thoughts are:

- Able to be grown in containers.
- Easy to grow, an attractive display in a garden.
- Easy to grow with lots of blooms, easy to store.
- Attractive blooms that are unlikely to win in a show.
- Blooms have mixed form.
- Blooms are variegated with inconsistent variegation.

Containers are difficult to bring to a show. It is not possible to show flowers that are easy to grow and make an attractive display in a garden without going to the garden. Attractive blooms that are unlikely to win can be shown in a people's choice category. It was decided we focus on education and outreach for this category of growers. It is felt any dahlia that you enjoy growing is a garden dahlia. Even if you don't want to exhibit dahlias, you can use the same information for growing that exhibitors use. For those

who may want to move into growing dahlias for exhibition, a Dahlias 101 course would be helpful. This could be a category within the garden dahlia committee. Other categories within the garden dahlias could be growing dahlias in containers and dahlias for garden display. This discussion seems to be a distinction between those who grow flowers because they want to exhibit and those who only grow because they enjoy the flower. The areas we need to think about for those growers who just grow dahlias because they enjoy them is how to reach them, how to provide them materials and how to keep them aligned with the ADS. The committee hopes to have an article relevant for outreach in each issue of the *Bulletin* and to be included on the website.

Laura's society is going to have a garden dahlia category in their show. Their board members approved it for their August show and have developed some simple rules for showing a garden dahlia. It will not be judged by ADS judges or follow the rules of judging as in our shows. This is an experiment at this time. They are encouraging novice and beginner classes. The three judges will be experienced club members and floral arrangers. There are some simple guidelines to follow for judging and they know what to expect from this class; there will be a monetary reward!!! Laura hopes to take lots of pictures and have a write-up of the "experiment" for the *Bulletin*. Hopefully in the future other clubs will follow and the lowly garden dahlia will get its place in the world.

Terry Schroeder
ADS General Secretary