

FORMING
A
LOCAL
DAHLIA SOCIETY

Prepared by
The
American Dahlia Society



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INTRODUCTION

The American Dahlia Society (ADS) developed this document to help interested dahlia growers form local dahlia societies.

The New Society Coordinator is a member of the ADS Executive Board and has volunteered to serve as a point of contact to assist you in forming your new dahlia society. Their email address is newsocietycoordinator@dahlia.org.

The ADS was “formed for the purpose of stimulating interest in and promoting the culture and development of the dahlia; to establish a standard nomenclature; to test new varieties and to give them such recognition as they deserve; to study the diseases and the pests of the dahlia and find remedies for the same; to disseminate information relating to the dahlia; to secure uniform standards for judging dahlia shows and to give exhibitions when deemed advisable.”

As you can see, there are many aspects to dahlias besides just growing them. As your local dahlia society grows and matures, your members may find interest in some or all these aspects.

ASSOCIATION WITH THE AMERICAN DAHLIA SOCIETY

We strongly encourage you to associate your society with the ADS to obtain the following benefits:

- Group Liability Insurance for all meetings and events at affordable rates. (Virtually any venue where you could have a dahlia show requires that the society have liability insurance.)
- One (1) copy of each edition of the ADS Bulletin.
- One (1) copy of current Classification and Handbook of Dahlias.
- An ADS medal to be suitable awarded by your society.
- Space for society reports in each issue of the ADS Bulletin.
- Your annual show results can be posted on the ADS website in December.
- Society name and contact listed on the ADS website.
- Support from other local dahlia societies and/or regional dahlia organizations for mentors and judges.
- Communications between the ADS Board and an individual selected by your society as the “ADS Representative.”
- Access to the digital resources available in the members only section of the ADS website.
- Participation in the ADS judging program.
- Participation in the ADS Seedling Bench Evaluation Program.

AFFILIATED VERSUS PARTICIPATING SOCIETIES

Your dahlia society can be associated with the ADS either as an Affiliated Society or a Participating Society -

AFFILIATED SOCIETY

The basic way to associate with ADS is as an “Affiliated Society.” For an annual fee of \$35, paid by the society, your society receives all the aforementioned benefits. Your members can elect to join the ADS by paying the current membership dues. Information regarding membership options and dues can be found on the ADS website. Dues can be paid online.

PARTICIPATING SOCIETY

A “Participating Society” receives all the same benefits as an “Affiliated Society.” The bonus is your society saves the \$35 per year affiliation fee.

To become a “Participating Society,” your dahlia society must submit to the ADS the annual dues for not fewer than 10 ADS members. Information regarding membership options and dues can be found on the ADS website.

To help you meet this minimum of 10 ADS members:

- A Household membership counts as two (2) members and
- Student memberships (up to age 25 and at a greatly reduced cost) also count.

One requirement to be a “Participating Society” is that one ADS member, called the “Membership Contact” is designated and reported to the ADS. The Membership Contact’s responsibilities are:

- Collecting the ADS membership dues from your dahlia society members who join ADS, and
 - Submitting the dues and contact information for each member to the ADS Membership Chair.
- Memberships dues can be submitted throughout the membership year.

For further information on memberships and reporting requirements, please contact the ADS Membership Chair at membership@dahlia.org.

In addition, one ADS member of the dahlia society needs to be designated to be the ADS Representative. It will be the responsibility of the ADS Representative to communicate information from the ADS to the Participating Society and to communicate the opinions and suggestions of the Participating Society to the Regional Vice-President and/or a designated ADS Officer, as is appropriate. The ADS Representative will be the point of contact for Seedling Bench Evaluation and show winner reports.

BECOMING ASSOCIATED WITH THE ADS

The following pages will give you tips and information on how to get your dahlia society started. Once your dahlia society is up and running there is a process to be accepted by the ADS as either an Affiliated or Participating society.

First the ADS needs to receive either the fee for an Affiliated society or the ADS membership dues and members contact information for a Participating society. This information needs to be sent to the ADS Membership Chair. Your society will need to designate a person to be the membership contact for the society and provide that information to the ADS Membership Chair.

Once the affiliation fee or membership dues are received, the New Society Coordinator will ask the ADS Board to accept your society. This will occur at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the ADS Board.

After your society is accepted by the ADS Board you will receive a letter from the President welcoming your dahlia society into the ADS. You will need to provide the name and contact information for your dahlia society’s president and ADS Representative to the names on the ADS contact list on page 9. Also, the contact list contains the names and contact information for the Regional Vice Presidents who may be able to lend support to your new dahlia society.

GETTING A DAHLIA SOCIETY STARTED

Dahlia societies provide a way for gardeners to come together to learn about dahlia culture, share resources and have fun while enjoying a common interest. Dahlia societies can be an informal or formal group, with governing documents, depending on the consensus of the group forming it. Your association with the ADS will be determined by how you set up your dahlia society.

A core group of dahlia enthusiasts are needed to start a new dahlia society. This group needs to be willing and dedicated to forming a dahlia society. To get started ask family members, friends, neighbors, and members of other organizations that you belong to join you in this endeavor. The core group needs to set the basic framework of the dahlia society and organize a launch meeting.

A launch meeting will help determine the level of interest in your local community for a dahlia society. At the meeting the core group should give a presentation on their vision of the organization and how it may be set up. An activity such as a presentation on dahlias or a tuber exchange will encourage others to attend the meeting. Social media can be used to recruit potential new members. In addition, flyers announcing the meeting can be posted at local gardening centers.

The attendance at the launch meeting will help determine if the dahlia society is going to be an informal or formal group of dahlia enthusiasts. The more members you have the greater the need for a formal organization with bylaws, officers, and a board of directors. We recommend that you purchase a copy of the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order for your dahlia society to help get you started setting up your organization and for later assistance in conducting orderly business meetings.

The bylaws for your dahlia society need to be tailored to fit the state or provincial laws where your dahlia society is located. In addition, if you decide that your organization is going to become a non-profit corporation, in the state or province where you are located, you will need to have articles of incorporation prepared and filed with the appropriate government agency or ministry.

To find the resources you need to set up your dahlia society you can contact:

- The Secretary of State office, or similar agency or ministry, in the state or province in which you are located.
- Local or state/provincial bar association
- Local or state/provincial chamber of commerce
- Organizations dedicated to assisting non-profit or charitable organizations.

An internet search will help you find what resources are available in your local area. You should get legal and tax advice from knowledgeable specialists before adopting any formal and legal documents for your dahlia society. It is better to get started on the right foot.

Some local dahlia societies in the United States have applied for and received Internal Revenue Service (IRS) status as non-profit or charitable organization, often referred to as a 501(c)(3) organization. IRS rules have made it easier to obtain tax-exempt or charitable status, however each dahlia society needs to determine if this is suitable or necessary for their organization. Information regarding federal taxes and non-profit or charitable organizations will be found on the IRS website. In addition, your legal and tax advisers can help your dahlia society with this decision. You may find information online from the National Garden Clubs who have prepared step by guidance on how to get non-profit status. (<https://gardenclub.org/blog/how-file-your-garden-clubs-501c3-status>)

Once you have your local dahlia society organized you may need an account at a bank or credit union to collect dues and pay the dahlia society's expenses. You should consult with your local bank or credit union to determine what is necessary to set up an account. The bank may require a state/province and/or federal issued business identification numbers.

COMMUNICATION

After getting the dahlia society set up and the leaders chosen, communication is the next most important activity to ensure the healthy success of any dahlia society.

A monthly newsletter will keep your members informed about upcoming meetings and events. In addition, the newsletter can include monthly dahlia culture tips which can be of interest to both novice and experienced growers. Ideally your dahlia society will have members with the graphic design and/or writing skills necessary to produce a colorful and inviting newsletter each month.

The newsletter can be distributed electronically to your members using an email list or a service such as Mailchimp or Constant Contact. You may still have a few holdouts that require a copy be mailed to them.

In addition to communicating with your members, you also need to communicate with the public to attract new members. In today's digital age a well-designed web site that provides information about your meetings and events, dahlia culture, memberships, etc. is a necessity. Social media is another effective means of generating interest in the dahlia and your dahlia society. It is important that both your website and social media pages are updated regularly to keep them fresh.

Handouts on dahlia culture at tuber/plant sales and shows are also effective and well-received. All handouts should include a link to the website of your dahlia society. Membership application forms should also be available. Some societies provide speakers to other horticultural societies and public events at garden centers/nurseries. Your dahlia society should provide enough handouts for your speakers to distribute at these events.

Many dahlia societies have sign-up sheets at their tuber/plant sales and shows. Typically, these "sign-ups" are used to send invitations for your tuber and plant sales the following spring.

MEETINGS

Although some societies meet every month of the year, many societies only meet six or seven times around the growing season.

Meeting places can range from public venues - arboretums, trial gardens, community centers, agricultural centers, libraries, churches, granges, or restaurants - to private venues like members' homes and gardens. Some places may charge a fee for the use of their facilities, but with a little research you may find free venues. Providing snacks is an option to think about.

Over the past couple of years, it has become common for societies to hold their meetings using video conferencing services such as Zoom. If you live where the winter weather is inclement, meeting via video conferencing is a viable alternative. In addition, some local societies are using a mix of video conferencing and in-person meetings.

We always encourage dahlia societies to meet at or visit dahlia gardens during the peak growing months of July, August, and September. There is nothing like an actively growing dahlia garden to instruct and inspire members!

In addition to the social aspect of your meetings, it is also important to have a portion of the meetings dedicated to dahlia culture. This can take the form of a guest speaker (from a local university, agricultural extension service, or other horticultural organizations), a video or PowerPoint presentation, or a general discussion on growing or showing dahlias.

Dahlia society business must be conducted at some point. Your members may decide to have a portion of each meeting set aside to review finances or actions recommended by your leadership. Or, they may prefer to delegate all ordinary business operations to the board of directors and only retain minimal oversight at an annual business meeting. This leaves maximum meeting time for dahlias and socializing.

Your dahlia society will remain more viable if the meetings meet your members' desires and needs in both location and content. You will find many innovative ideas for meeting topics and activities in the Society Reports in the ADS Bulletin.

SHOWS AND SHOW RULES

The yearly highlight for most dahlia societies is the annual dahlia show, the ADS encourages the local societies to hold one, if feasible. This is the time when dahlia growers can display the results of all their hard work. Shows may range from informal dahlia displays to highly competitive events and may be one or more days in length. You may also decide to hold more than one show per season.

The dahlia society will determine its own show rules; the ADS does not have set rules for local dahlia shows. However, if you include an ADS seedling bench evaluation in your show you will need to follow the rules for the ADS seedling bench evaluation. These rules are available on the ADS website in the members only section.

Show dates should be based on your peak bloom period. This usually gives you a window from two to three weeks. If your dahlia society is in one of regional conferences, you should contact its ADS Regional Vice President to confirm your show does not conflict with other planned shows or events for region. The list of ADS Regional Vice Presidents is on the contact list on page 9.

As with meetings, there is a wide range of public places to hold your show. Garden-related sites like arboretums and botanical gardens are the best venues, but many societies hold successful shows in shopping malls, hotel convention centers, parks, etc. Key factors to consider are security, water and power sources, protection from the elements, parking, access, and fees (for both the dahlia society and visitors).

Participation in local shows gives exhibitors an opportunity to perfect their skills in staging blooms for higher levels of competition, such as regional or national shows. Remember that novices will require assistance or direction in staging their blooms appropriately.

Rules for your local show can be disseminated as one part of a member's booklet or handout or as a separate document. It should be available as early in the growing season so exhibitors can plan their gardens accordingly.

ADS JUDGES PROGRAM

The ADS encourages the local dahlia societies to have their shows judged by ADS certified judges. The requirements to become an ADS judge can be found in the members only section of the ADS website. Those interested in judging dahlias start out as candidate judges. Then through further training and experience they move on to be an accredited judge and then finally they can become a senior judge. There are judging training resources available in the members only section of the ADS website. Recently some excellent training modules have been provided on the members only area for self guided training. For more information about the ADS judging program you can contact the Judges Accreditation chair at judging@dahlia.org.

ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

Societies regularly lose members for a variety of reasons. Because of this, dahlia societies must continually recruit new members to remain viable. From these new members will come the future "core" of dahlia society leaders and workers. In addition to members bringing in interested family and friends, the best two events to attract new members are the annual tuber/plant sales and the shows. It benefits the dahlia society to have enthusiastic members staffing specific "membership booths or tables" at these two events.

Some societies help new members by offering a small collection of dahlia tubers or other incentives.

Meeting a grower's basic desire of "growing dahlias well" is a primary function of a dahlia society. Meeting that need attracts new members as well as retaining existing members.

If you have experienced growers, a formalized mentoring program can pay healthy dividends. Long lasting friendships often develop as these experienced growers take the new growers "under their wings" for a season or two.

Providing localized growing guides also sparks interest and can lead to new memberships. Lists of dahlia varieties that grow well locally are also helpful in building loyalty to a dahlia society. Your dahlia society's contact information, or a membership form, should be included in each publication.

A basic outreach program to the public is easily accomplished. It may include:

- Developing a close relationship with a local gardening center or botanical garden.
- Providing experienced and enthusiastic speakers to other horticultural societies, local gardening centers, civic groups, etc.
- Maintaining a dahlia demonstration garden at a local park, hospital, or other publicly accessed space.

These activities provide forums in addition to your dahlia society events which often result in people asking, “How do I join your dahlia society?” Any dahlia society literature distributed at these events or locations should include membership forms.

FUND RAISING ACTIVITIES

To meet minimal operating expenses, most dahlia societies collect annual dues, usually between ten and twenty dollars per year. Some societies target the dues to cover specific expenses, such as the cost of meeting spaces.

Also, local societies should raise extra funds to pay for show prizes, vases, publicity, etc.

The first, and usually largest, fundraising event is the spring dahlia tuber/plant sale - typically in April and/or May. Members are encouraged to donate their extra tubers and/or plant cuttings. In addition, societies may develop a program to plant extra dahlias specifically for their sales or use the tubers from their demonstration garden(s).

It is a wonderful opportunity for members and the public to acquire locally grown tubers and plants at reasonable prices. Dahlia societies may have one or several sales, depending on each dahlia society’s needs, on the number of volunteers or on the materials donated.

Developing a close relationship with a local gardening center may provide an outlet for consignment sales of tubers and/or plants. Locally grown, proven varieties can be especially desirable by the public. Also, some local dahlia societies have found online tubers sales to be beneficial.

Tuber and/or plant auctions are a great program for your April and/or May membership meetings. An enthusiastic, experienced dahlia grower, acting as auctioneer, can generate excitement and high bids for new or highly desired varieties. These auctions are a membership benefit that could be attractive to new members.

Another fundraising event to consider can occur at your annual dahlia show. After staging the best entries in the show, some societies encourage members to bring any extra blooms for sale during the show. Additionally, some societies will offer show flowers for sale at the end of the show. Flowers are sold individually, in vases, or bouquets - typically at set prices.

Additional funds can be generated by breaking down bulk purchases of growing aids, e.g., labels, stakes, fertilizers, etc., for sale to members (and the public at the tuber/plant sale). By purchasing from a distributor, you can sometimes save on the cost of these products. Dahlia society can pass along some of the savings to members and still make a small profit to support the dahlia society.

As a reminder, if none of your members has experience with state and federal tax laws, you are encouraged to seek professional advice. States and local taxing entities may require sales tax on all or some of your sales. Also, the management of the venue for your tuber sale(s) may require you to get a business license and/or plant sale permit. Sometimes, other horticultural societies in your area can help with this information.

ADS CONTACT LIST 07-19-2023

New Dahlia Societies - Contact the following ADS Officers and Committee Chairs with your President's and ADS Rep's contact information

ADS President	Mark Oldenkamp	president@dahlia.org
ADS 1st Vice President	Linda Holmes Cook	1st-vp@dahlia.org
ADS Secretary	Terry Schroeder	secretary@dahlia.org
ADS Store	Dan Baulig	store-manager@dahlia.org
Classification	Karen Sanchez	classification@dahlia.org
Editor	Pat Looney	adsbulletin@dahlia.org
Insurance	Mel Epstein	insurance@dahlia.org
Judges Accreditation	Bob Schroeder	judging@dahlia.org
Membership	Elva Sellens	membership@dahlia.org
New Society Coordinator	currently open	newsocietycoordinator@dahlia.org
Seedling Bench	Roger Walker	seedling-bench@dahlia.org
Treasurer	Charles Miehm	treasurer@dahlia.org
Webmaster	Sharon Swaney	webmaster@dahlia.org

ADS Representative Coordinators

USA - Linda Holmes Cook	rep-coordinator-us@dahlia.org
Canada - Ken Jensen	rep-coordinator-canada@dahlia.org

Regional Vice Presidents

Robert Fakovec	north-atlantic-regional-vp@dahlia.org
Jeff Miner	midwest-regional-vp@dahlia.org
Lori Goehring	southern-states-regional-vp@dahlia.org
Dave Smith	mid-atlantic-regional-vp@dahlia.org
John Morton	pacific-sw-regional-vp@dahlia.org
Steve Lamb	pacific-nw-regional-vp@dahlia.org
Allison Richards	federation-nw-regional-vp@dahlia.org

Other ADS Officers and Committee Chairs

available in the current ADS Bulletin
and on the ADS website