

Characteristics of the Dahlia: Desirable and Undesirable

When evaluating a cultivar, the judge must balance the good with the bad. Few dahlias, if any, possess all positive characteristics. Although the ADS scorecard lists some faults that a bloom may possess, the judge must also consider the strengths of a bloom and balance all attributes as they assign an overall point value.

COLOR (20 points)	
DESIRABLE	UNDESIRABLE
Overall	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear • Bright • Pure • Sparkling • Lustrous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dull/Gray • Impure • Blotchy/Coarse • Streaked • Veined
Blends	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth transition between colors • Harmonious or contrasting colors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneven • Clashing colors
Bicolors and Variegated	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even distribution of 2nd color • Good contrast • Sharp/distinct separation • Adequate amount 2nd color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneven • Poor contrast • Bleeds • Inadequate 2nd color
Multiple Blooms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform Color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bracts • Contrasting obvious petaloids • Wolf petals
Other Undesirable Faults	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBE Bruising • SBE Insect Injury • SBE Mildew 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conspicuous bracts • Fading, bruising • Spotting

FORM (30 points)	
DESIRABLE	UNDESIRABLE
Symmetry/Centers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round • Good proportion • Adequate height • Full • Tight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oval • Poor proportion • Too high, too low • Misshapen/bull nose • Multiple centers • Dished • Elongated / Oblong • Open (blown center) • Weak • Hard/green
Contour	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good build • Full petallage • Ideal ray floret arrangement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asymmetrical • Lopsided • Flicked floret • Gaps present • Rough/staghorn • Lacks ray florets
Fully Developed (SBE)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At peak of maturity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over mature • Immature
True to Form	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets ideal standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed form or does not meet ideal standard

SUBSTANCE (10 points)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Springiness and toughness of the flower parts • Firm, crisp, thick, stiff • Uniform back and face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ray florets soft, lack springiness, droopy • Not turgid • Ray florets missing, shriveled, thin, brown, dirty, misshapen • Overly mature, lack of substance affects symmetry and color

BLOOM POSITION (10 Points)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 degrees • Note: Top facing OK for Poms, MB, BA, and WL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Down facing • Side facing • Top facing on some forms (minor for AA & A sizes)

FOLIAGE (10 points)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean • Luxuriant color • Good proportion, artistic formation • Uniform size & form • Alternate & opposite • Turgid • Adequate amount 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dirty, unappealing • Pale, blotchy • Out-of-proportion, poor texture • Too small, too large • Wilted • Sparse • Coarse, bubbly • Folded, crinkled

STEM (10 points)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, erect, graceful, round • Straight • Good proportion: length & diameter • Even, smooth, circular in cross section • One color (minor if not) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak, willowy, rubbery, wiry • Irregular, crooked • Too long or too short • Too thin or too large • Misplaced spur leaf (minor)

JUDGING GUIDELINES					
Characteristic	Total Value	Best 93%	Great 90%	Good 85%	Poor 80%
Form	30	28	27	25.5	24
Color	20	18.5	18	17	16
Substance	10	9.25	9	8.5	8
Stem	10	9.25	9	8.5	8
Foliage	10	9.25	9	8.5	8
Bloom Position	10	9.25	9	8.5	8
Uniformity Floriferousness	10	9.25	9	8.5	8