

## Virus Success Story, 2016

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A dahlia garden with no virus? Would that be a great result? The answer, of course, is “Yes!” At least one gardener who submitted samples to Washington State University (WSU) last summer, through the American Dahlia Society (ADS) virus program, appears to have a great start on achieving that result!

The ADS provided all dahlia growers with the opportunity to test plants from their 2016 gardens. Over 40 individuals took advantage of that opportunity. If we average out the results from those 40 gardens, the “average” submission consisted of samples from 17 plants. In that average submission, over eight of the plants would have tested positive for virus. Five of the plants with virus would have Tobacco streak virus (TSV). Dahlia mosaic virus (DMV) would be detected in two plants and one plant would have Tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV). Just eight or nine plants would be found to be free of virus. That “average” submission is a long way from a garden with no virus!

We were pleasantly surprised, however, to discover that there were two gardens where there were no viruses detected! One of the gardeners had submitted 5 samples, a relatively small set. The other gardener sent samples from 12 plants.

The suppliers of the samples and the identification of their gardens are confidential. Nevertheless, two of the virus committee members had the opportunity to ask the grower who sent the 12 samples about his garden. “Do you do anything special to avoid virus in your garden?” His answer was music to our ears(!): “I pull out any plant that shows any sign of virus. I probably throw out some plants that don’t have virus; but I do not want to risk leaving a plant with virus in my garden.” The signs of virus that concern this ADS gardener include yellowing of the veins or development of a yellow pattern on the foliage and stunting of the plants. The plants are pulled out as soon as those conditions develop. He also told us that his club’s awareness of the virus project and its concerns about virus in their display garden have helped him to spot signs of virus in his own garden.

This gardener’s basic motivation to achieve a virus free garden is his commitment to avoid transferring virus to his seedlings. All hybridizers will understand and share that objective! His secret to success is exactly the same as the basic strategy espoused by your virus committee (and published in 1980(!) by Keith Hammett). “If in doubt, throw it out!”

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