

The JUDGE's Corner

Ron Miner - baronminer@aol.com

We've been talking about Form and Color over several of the recent Digests. They deserve a lot of attention because, between them, they comprise half of the value in the seedling scorecard (28 and 22 points, respectively). It is, nevertheless, time to move on to other attributes. The other 50% is distributed over six additional attributes. Can you name them? Now would be a good time to go over to the computer, open up the ADS website, sign in to "members only" and print the new scoresheets. Go ahead, I'll wait. www.dahlia.org

Scorecard Back—Description
Scorecard Back—Outline



Note that there are now two different "backs" to go with the scoresheets. One is a written description of the attributes and the various positives and negatives associated with them. It will be most useful for CN and AC judges (and at least once a year for the SR judges!) to read it carefully. The second back is an outline of the various positives and negatives for judging blooms and it will be useful as a handy reminder for everyone who has the basics from the first sheet well in hand.

Now, let's look at Substance: at 15 points, it is the most valuable of the other attributes. The two backs you've just printed tell you to look for florets that are clean, crisp, and springy. Of course, if you see florets that have fallen onto the show table, you know that substance is less than perfect. Perhaps the best way to imagine poor substance is to think of the condition of many of our blooms at the end of Sunday after a hot weekend at Petitti's. You will find a lot of substance faults there. You need, however, to be able to find substance faults a lot more subtle than the ones you would see at the end of a show.

The picture at the top of the next page is of Pennsgift, a cultivar known to easily reach 12" in diameter. Gigantic blooms like that tend to have difficulty in keeping good substance. Look at the differences in the bloom above and below the equator. The difference is more than bearding. The florets below the equator, particularly at the back of the bloom, are drooping.



Laciniated cultivars tend to have a similar tendency. The Lois V shown here may just have a big gap at 11 o'clock; but it also may be illustrating a tendency for those florets to droop, causing the gap.

How can you determine which is the case? My (quite controversial) answer is to gently touch a few of the florets with the eraser end of your pencil or your fingertip.



That should let you separate droopy from springy florets. (Some very good judges insist that you should not touch a bloom—so do so with great care if you use my approach.)

Another useful approach in evaluating substance is to have a “standard” in mind. Which cultivars look freshly cut at the end of that weekend show? Cary Miner can exhibit that level of substance and, of course, I grow a lot of them. It is useful for me to compare an entry to that cultivar in my mind’s eye. The point is that you may want to study the cultivars in your own gardens. Are some of them virtually always limp? Do some

of them feel a bit like a strawflower rather than a dahlia? Experience is an important part of judging substance and your own garden is a great place to develop some of that experience!

Characteristic	100%	90%	85%	80%	75%
Substance	15	13.5	12.75	12	11.25

Do you remember this table? You can find the entire table at the bottom of the page on the “Outline” back you just printed. It is an important tool to help translate our observations of faults to a numerical penalty. A passing score of 85% depends on observing a few minor faults and no major faults. (Remember the table in the August column?) My sense is that the two blooms shown in this article would have major substance faults and deserve a penalty of 3 or more points (or a score, for substance, of 12 or fewer points). It is equally important to use the table to recognize that a penalty over 2 1/4 points amounts to a failing score for substance.

For you ADS judges out there, go back to the website and take a look at the new judges tests that are now available there. The changes are somewhat subtle and Bob plans on writing a new test fairly soon. But feel free to go ahead with this one if you want to fill a couple extra hours of what is left of our winter!

**AMERICAN DAHLIA SOCIETY
EXAMINATION FOR ACCREDITED JUDGE**

Name _____ Date _____
To become/maintain as an Accredited Judge, see www.dahlia.org or ADS Bulletin September 2004

This examination is open book using the Classification and Handbook of Dahlias (CHD) (2012), Judges Manual (JM) (2002), and ADS Seedling Score Card (SSC) (2012). Copies of the seedling scorecards are located in the back of the current Classification and Handbook of Dahlias. When answering the questions, always use the most current source of information.

