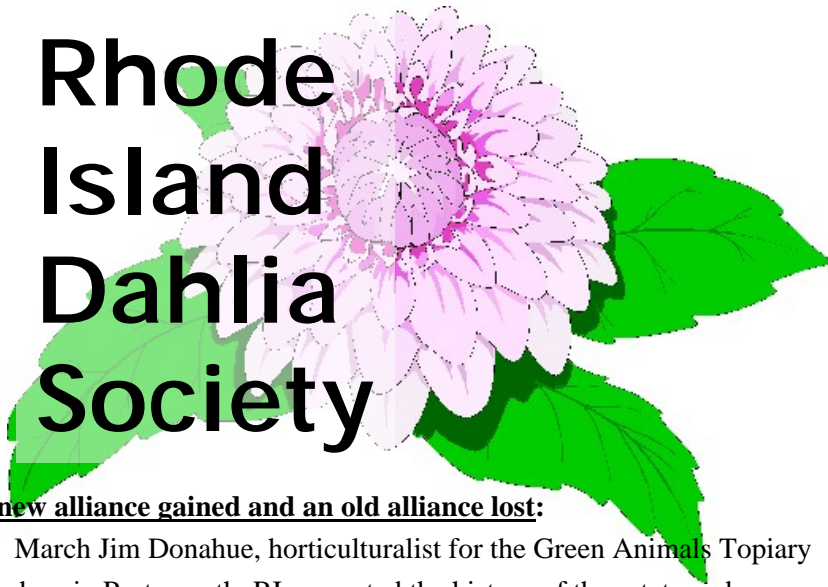


Rhode Island Dahlia Society



Donna Lane Photo

At RIDS 41st annual Dahlia Show, a thank you from Green animals Topiary Gardens, the Newport Preservation Society

A new alliance gained and an old alliance lost:

In March Jim Donahue, horticulturalist for the Green Animals Topiary Gardens in Portsmouth, RI presented the history of the estate and proposed that RIDS help them develop a dahlia garden. Green Animals is part of the Newport Preservation Society and had had, years ago, a dahlia garden. In April after Larry Additon calculated and presented to the Society how many plants could thrive in the space allocated, how many tubers the Society would need to donate to the project, which varieties might fit the height requirements, how much work it would require, etc, the membership voted to go forward with the project. In May before the tuber auction, Roberta Achtermeier died. Roberta, a former President of RIDS, had been ill for some time, but the death was unexpected. Roberta's mother offered all of her dahlias and garden books to the Society. Many of Roberta's tubers were already planted, a dedicated crew of volunteers helped dig them to be transplanted at the Green Animals garden. In all about 50 dahlias were planted in Portsmouth. In August the garden was dedicated to Roberta's memory. In September at our show Jim presented a large flower arrangement to the Society as a thank you for its participation in their dahlia garden venture. The arrangement, pictured above, used dahlias and other flowers grown at the Green Animals site. The same month Green Animals held a public event called Dahlia Daze. Twenty people came to view the garden, to hear Jim lecture about dahlia culture, and to ask questions. RIDS was represented and our members helped answer questions.

Meeting programs you may have missed:

Our traditional seasonal cycle started with a slide show of blooms, spring introductions for 2006. American Dahlia Society has procedures for taking a new dahlia cultivar from seed to named variety. The seedlings you see at our Dahlia Show could be on the way to stardom in the catalogues. Several RIDS members have developed named cultivars.

**There was a demonstration on locating eyes on tubers and dividing dahlias tubers in the spring.

**Auctioneer Nicholas Sterling kept the bidding lively at the May and June tuber auctions. We also sold plants grown from cuttings, grab bags of dahlias and border dahlias grown from seed. The auctions generate the bulk of the money to be used for prizes in our shows.

**An open discussion in the fall about digging up tubers, preparation for storage and storage methods.

**RIDS President Dan Dougherty gave a demonstration on waxing tubers to preserve them over the winter. Waxing can be an excellent method where storage space is at a premium or to store a small tuber you feel might not make it with your usual method.

**Joan Additon brought in the materials required and discussed how to preserve blooms by drying them in silica gel. She had a number of blooms she had already dried. The blooms and colors were well preserved.

The summer potluck picnic: We dined underneath the tent in Joan and Larry Additon's backyard. Over forty members brought favorite dishes or desserts to the party. Before and after the filling meal members wandered the gardens and enjoyed the dahlias, so both mouth and eyes feasted. More than one member was noted adding varieties to their wish list for next year.

The shows: In the freshly painted Washington County Fair agriculture building, Bart Buffington and his regular crew of volunteers polished off the donuts and judged dahlia blooms. Hundreds of visitors strolled by the display pleased by the blooms and arrangements, (see the Court of Honor photo on page 2) while steadfast volunteers fielded questions. ** The 41st Annual Rhode Island Dahlia Society Show held in Wickford had 490 entries and almost a thousand blooms. The day of the show RIDS volunteers provided the traditional free lunch for the judges, clerks and other volunteers working at the show. From the stream of visitors six new members joined. The cleanup and dahlia giveaway was also well attended.

**The Mid Island Dahlia Society sponsored the ADS 2007 National Dahlia Show. (See photo below). Several RIDS members made the trek to help judge and clerk the huge show. The number of varieties displayed provided an ideal opportunity to add to one's wish list. A number of commercial growers and originators of new varieties were on hand. If the national show is ever this close again RIDS should consider renting a bus and take a group.

Society Business (all in November): The Society now has a portable public address system. Meetings and the auctions will be amplified. There was a lively discussion (tabled until Feb.) about whether to hold one or two auctions next year. The Society changed the requirements about number of sets of leaves on show blooms. The Nomination Committee nominated for President: Walter Gross, for Vice President: Donna Lane, for Treasurer: Larry Additon, for Secretary: Nicholas Sterling. The committee reported that Donna Lane and Bill Mattison agreed to serve on the RIDS Executive Committee, taking seats left open by John Northrup, whose term expires, and by Roberta Achtermeier, who expired.

The Weather 2006: The weather was ideal for all our public and out door events, but there was May in April, two months of monsoon rains, 90° weather way too early. Even if we were not under stress, it is likely our dahlias were. While some members had rotted tubers and shorter, less productive plants, other members reported the later season blooming produced some of their finest flowers ever.

Winter Party: It is too late for reservations for the Christmas holiday dinner on December 3 at the Hoof Fin and Feather. But you will be missing a rollicking good time. The talk ranges from family to flowers, from woodchucks to weather. The gift exchange last year brought an impromptu fashion show of matching Santa boxer shorts and hat.

Next Year: In February 2007 the new officers will be voted in and Dan Dougherty will hand the gavel over to Walter Gross. The discussions about the number and dates of auctions will need to be resolved. The program for February features Mary Beth Miller of Gardening for Good, a national non-profit organization that provides professionals, individuals and caregivers with ideas and programs on horticultural therapy.

Other Local Dahlia News: An article by Rudi Hempe about dahlias, Walter and Dot Taylor with good photos from the Washington County Fair show was published in the South County Living magazine, fall 2006.

This unofficial RIDS newsletter was compiled by Abbie Barber.



Noel Rowe Photo

A bloom from the ADS Trial Garden at Eisenhower Park Long Island,



Not even half of the blooms at The ADS National Show on Long Island



Donna Lane Photo