



My First Trial Garden
by Dianne Reitan



A few weeks ago, I attended the ADS annual open board meeting. Coming from a dry June in Colorado, I was expecting humidity and heat when I landed in Bloomington, Minnesota but this state was experiencing a lot of rain and surprisingly mild weather which was just fine by me. (Remember last year when the Front Range received

unprecedented rain for two months and wiped out 1/3 of my dahlias? This year, it's the opposite, with many of my dahlias slow to start because it's too arid!)

With 1,200 of my dahlias planted, I could take a long weekend jaunt to a part of the country I've never been. I enjoyed some wonderful camaraderie with dahlia growers all over the country and I learned the plans and goals of the ADS leadership as they transition to a new board president and a new Bulletin editor later this fall. One of the weekend activities was a trip to the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum where the Minnesota Dahlia Society hosted a fabulous picnic and showed off their North Central Trial Garden that society members maintain.

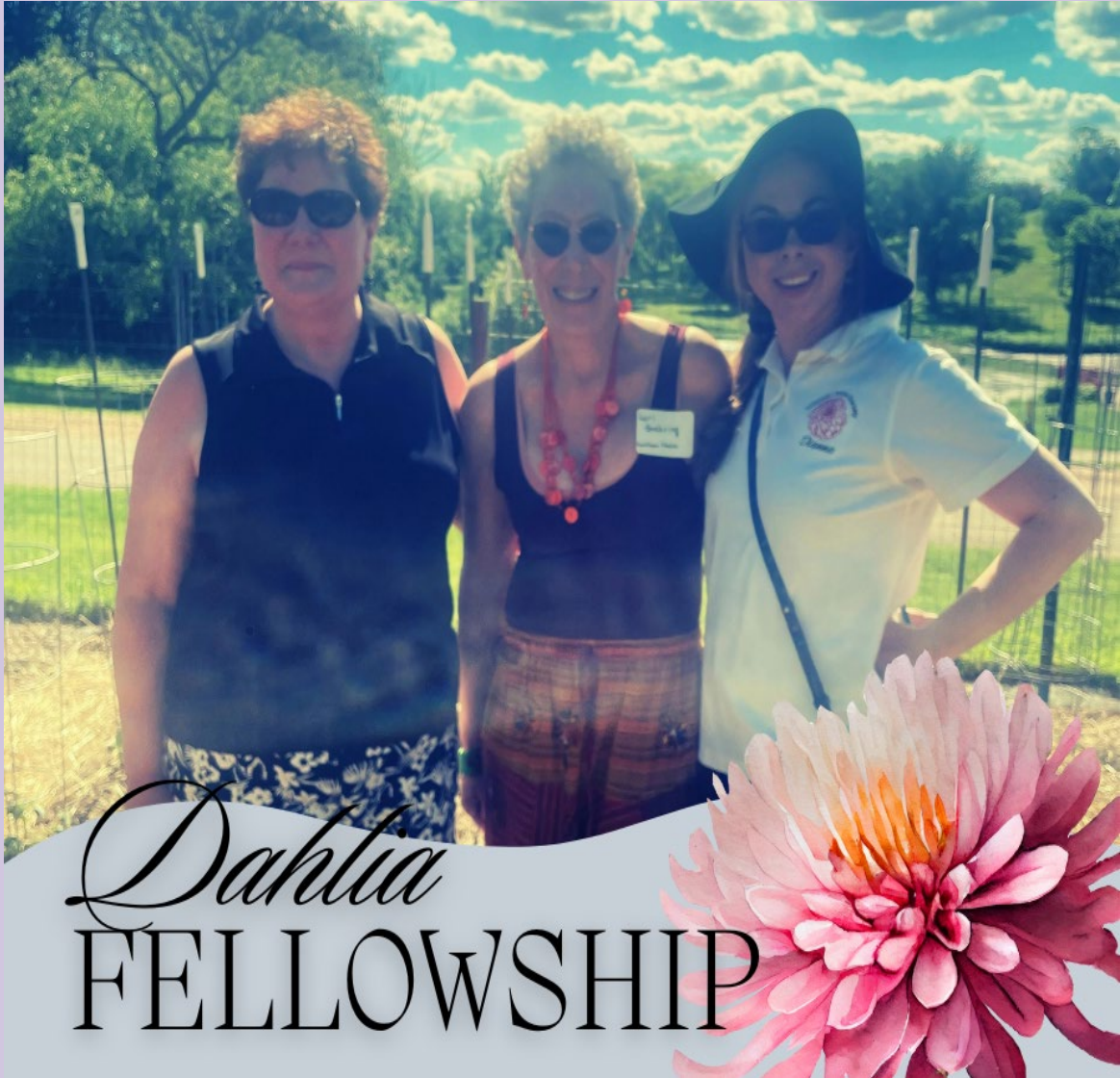
There are only eight trial gardens in North America, and they are all sponsored by the American Dahlia Society. The purpose of a trial garden is to provide a place for hybridizers to have their new dahlia cultivars evaluated. Members of the Minnesota Dahlia Society are privileged to have the opportunity to grow and care for these potential new introductions right there in their own backyard. Every expert grower in their society has cut their teeth in this trial garden. To view where the other trial gardens are located and to read the Trial Garden Rules, [click here](#). (The stock has to be destroyed?!)

Also, here is a [10-minute virtual tour](#) of the 2021 Canby Trial Garden at Swan Island Dahlias in Oregon. A dahlia variety does not need to pass in a trial garden to be introduced for sale, or even to be entered in dahlia shows, but a good trial garden score is something prospective buyers value.



One of the first things we all noticed when we walked through the trial garden at the arboretum in Minnesota, was the combination of the stakes inside the tomato cages. Most of us on the tour usually do one or the other, but this society has found success with using both staking and the cages to ensure optimal support for the dahlias. They also put the straw mulch ON TOP of their weed fabric to help with the intense heat. Last year I used barley straw in my dahlia garden on top of my compost as a way to enrich the soil and to hold in moisture after watering. Now that I use weed fabric over a larger part of my dahlia farm, I am contemplating if I want to put the mulch on top of the black barrier as I think it would look more like a natural garden in addition to helping with temperature control. Then I could just move the straw onto the bare ground as I roll up the fabric at the end of the season and mix the straw into the new compost I bring into my garden.

No matter how many years we've been growing dahlias, even those with incredible experience and knowledge run into trouble. To learn about the deluge that stunted the dahlias at the trial garden in Minnesota and cause some tubers to rot, visit their [Facebook page](#). Glad to see they are moving forward together and still having fun!



Dahlia FELLOWSHIP

Left to right: Sharon Swaney (ADS Webmaster) Lori Goehring and Dianne Reitan tour the dahlia trial gardens at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum managed by the Minnesota Dahlia Society.

On Sunday morning of my long weekend with ADS, I had the opportunity to film our president, Brad Freeman. Brad is the visionary behind the new ADS National Show Endowment Fund and I think you will agree after you watch this [short video](#), that he makes a compelling argument as to why dahlia growers and societies need this fund.

Here's hoping you have a fabulous summer growing dahlias!



Brad
Freeman

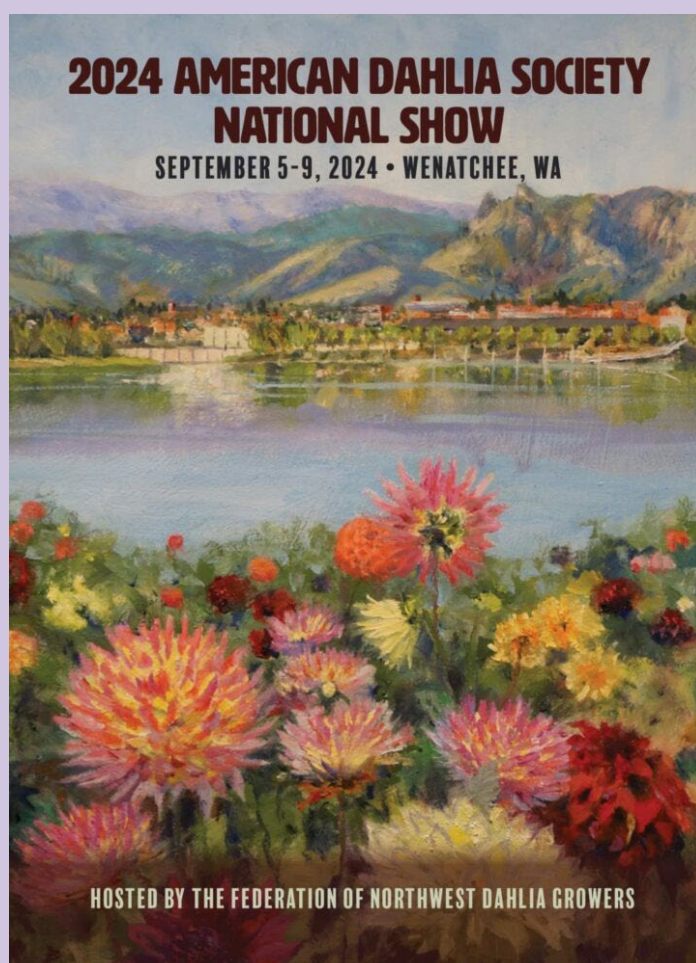
ADS
President

Sign up for the [ADS National Show](#) Now!

Wenatchee is quite pretty, since it sits at the base of the Cascades. East Wenatchee is home to many orchard workers, so there is a great selection of Mexican restaurants, tiendas, and panaderias. And the orchards themselves are worth visiting. America's cherry harvest is 80% Wenatchee and Columbia River.

Just south and west is Mission Ridge, a great ski area with hiking trails. And not far is Cashmere and Leavenworth. The latter is one of the top ten tourist destinations and a draw year-round. It's like Ouray but with German culture.

[Come join us](#) for a memorable experience!





Martin Kral and Dianne Reitan, co-authors of the Dahlia Talk, are shown here at the 2023 ADS National Show in Portland, Oregon.

[American Dahlia Society](#)

