



What Happened at the ADS 57th Annual Show?

By Dianne Reitan

Dahlias all over the country are blooming in their peak season but summer break is over and so is the American Dahlia Society 57th annual show hosted in Wenatchee, WA by the Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers. Because of my husband's help, I was able to leave my 900 dahlia plants for a few days so I could attend my second national show. Leaving home for an early morning flight and returning home on an early morning flight, meant less sleep, less disbudding and less done on my to-do list, but it was worth it!

I was fortunate to travel to the show with my fellow members of the Colorado Dahlia Society and I was quite proud that our club was well represented when Adrienne Aragon Schafer and John Quade participated in the clerking and judging process respectively. Even my friend Marsha, who went with me to the national show in Portland last year, convinced me to enter the novice arrangement category with her, Amber Waves, using other people's cactus and semi-cactus dahlias and we won 2nd place! (Marsha knew what she was doing as she has taken several floral arrangement classes.) What a great way to include attendees in the show that can't bring their own dahlias due to distance.



Adrienne Aragon
Schafer

John
Quade



The 2,000+ blooms that were entered into the annual competition this year were diverse and stunning! But there was one bloom that caused a lot of conversation. Sandy Boley's new introduction, Sandia Tulip, is unlike anything we have seen before at the shows. Some questioned that instead of a new novelty introduction it is simply a waterlily form that was 'closed' at the time. When Stephen Boley posted pictures of their new creation on the ADS Facebook page, it gathered almost 500 likes and nearly 200 comments! Sandy plans to introduce it in a few years. In addition to taking photos of the exhibition blooms, I was able to take a photo of my co-author Martin Kral doing the actual photographing of dahlias that won in their category at the show. I've asked Martin to share his perspective of what happened at the show.



Sandy Boley's Sandia Tulip

**New novelty or a
waterlily form that is closed?**



Martin Kral: For anyone familiar with West Coast dahlia shows, this exhibition was extraordinary. Smack in the middle of Washington, the town of Wenatchee is famous for its fruit orchards ("Apple Capital of the World" its motto goes). For a September weekend it also hosted America's largest dahlia show. Its organizers, the Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers, pulled off an event that doubters feared would give the Northwest growers a black eye. After all, Central Washington is known more for fruit, grain, and vegetables, not for floriculture. A harsh climate - frigid in winter, torrid in summer - the lack of shade and water, and rocky terrain mark this large region as an inhospitable zone for raising flowers like dahlias.

Accepting these challenges, the local club (North Central Washington Dahlia Society) urged the Federation to consider holding a future ADS National Show in Wenatchee. Challenge accepted, a large committee began working in 2016 toward the goal of a 2020 show. Well, you know what happened then. The first instances of COVID were reported in this state, so show plans and already-committed reservations were shelved as the world-wide health crisis took precedence.

But those plans were merely suspended; the Federation offered to reorganize for four years hence. Those eight years of preparation allowed the organizers to fine-tune the detailed plans, and with regular meetings called by NWFDG president Wayne Lobaugh, every agenda item was duly discussed and issues resolved. COVID gave such efforts the necessary tool and impetus for holding such online talks via Zoom, as in-person gatherings were discouraged for some time.



Chelan Butte Dahliary owner Lindsay Williams gave a wonderful tour of her dahlia farm on Friday before the weekend show.

The opportunity to show the dahlia world a Northwest region quite unlike the Puget Sound or Willamette areas was a tempting (and quite ambitious) objective. The reservations rolled in, the bus tours filled, hotels around the spacious convention center reported full guest rooms, and the local community admirably responded to the promotional efforts of the show committee.

Shortly before the onset of a period of hot days, local club members planted dahlias in rows at the Rocky Reach Dam north of town. This was to be the first bus tour stop of that Friday before the show. Nature soon intervened: most of the sprouting tubers were dug up and consumed by native yellow-bellied marmots. The beds had to be replanted, so by show time there was no show - just a lot of healthy green foliage. The bus travelers had to contend with a tour of the Columbia River dam, followed by a luncheon on its picnic grounds within sight of the dahlia plot.

More in the spirit of good intentions came as the visitors arrived at the Chelan Butte Dahliary, a five-year endeavor to raise dahlias commercially along the Columbia, surrounded by the steppe-like sagebrush vegetation typical of the region. A Kirkland, Washington couple now spends half the year operating this nursery, growing 3,300 dahlias (650 varieties) for cutflower and tuber sales. With water supplied from the nearby Columbia, the bushes look healthy enough in the heat, but the owners also must contend with spider mite infestations, they confessed.

Meanwhile, as exhibitors arrived with their entries, the convention center cold room filled with dahlias and arrangement materials. Since two Western Washington shows suddenly canceled within days of the National due to venue problems, greater participation in this one proved to be fortunate. Registrations were handled with dispatch, the show hall and seminar rooms showed great care, and my concerns about the huge photo contest (350+ entries!) were allayed once I realized that their registration and placement in the lobby had been managed well for two professional photogs to judge on Saturday morning. In fact, when I arrived then at 7 am, all photo entries had been mounted according to their class, thus freeing me from my assignment to assist in the effort. Instead, I focused on taking photos of the bustling crowd of dahlia exhibitors still placing their entries on the large number of skirted tables.



Once the judging was underway, I was assigned to take photos of the winners. By noon all awards had been handed out, the ribbons and large rosettes were affixed to these entries, and the top entries had been placed on the head table. Normally, I take note of unusual dahlias and new introductions at that point. Instead, I left the convention center and found some repose at the nearby Owl Drug, an old-fashioned soda fountain with a sterling reputation for 24-oz. milkshakes. That was lunch.

I made it back in time to take in some of the virus research presentation by Dr. Pappu. A very earnest effort, the virus update was quite thorough but more oriented toward a scientific (or virologist) audience, I thought. I resolved to ensure that my guests - Magistra Lupita Treviño of the Mexican Dahlia Association and her daughter Lupe - had their presentation in order, since we needed AV equipment to show Lupita's PowerPoint, as well as my video on the La Cometa project (highlighted in an article in the 2024 Dahlias of Today). With reportedly over 60 in the audience, we were moved into a larger room.

The evening banquet and awards presentation occurred shortly thereafter. The banquet hall was filled with participants, and the speeches and laudatory addresses went on for some time. Sitting right next to the dais, I had been given the task of photographing the winners and orators. Fortunately for all, my camera battery was exhausted just as the festivities concluded.



Tipsy from Chelan Butte Dahliary

Providentially, the reserve battery was in my camera sling bag left in the car. Back at my hotel, I checked camera functions and resolved to come early to take photos of dahlias I had marked in my log. As I entered the convention center Sunday morning, I noted that some of the basket entries in the lobby had been removed. I didn't think much then, but once I was in the cavernous show hall, I surmised that others had left with their entries, presumably to drive home early. This is a practice just not permitted or observed in our shows on the West Side. Although it may be understandable, considering the great distances that exhibitors at Nationals must travel, it should not be condoned. (At show's end, many remaining entries were donated to Wenatchee senior homes, hospitals, and community organizations that welcomed this commendable gesture by show managers.)

Sunday morning traditionally is given over to ADS programs, such as for classification and judging, followed by the ADS annual meeting with election of officers. Mark Oldenkamp took over from Brad Freeman as the new ADS President. The noontime genome presentation by Prof. Alex Harkess and his PhD candidate Zach Meharg was a seminar worth recording. The pair had an immediate rapport with its large audience; Dr. Harkess delivery could easily be followed by anyone. I hope that the video of that valuable presentation will be uploaded onto the ADS website.

Having checked out of my hotel right after the annual meeting, I now wore my Lederhosen suspender T-shirt. Next stop: the justly-famed Bavarian-themed village of Leavenworth and a Berner Würstl platter ahead of a long drive over Stevens Pass back to Seattle!

**Dahlia Talk Co-Authors
Martin Kral and Dianne Reitan
at the Rocky Reach Dam in Wenatchee, WA**



[American Dahlia Society](#)



American Dahlia Society | 16816 County Road 10 | Bristol, IN 46507 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)