



Farmers Market Bunch

By Dianne Reitan

Buying flowers at a local farmers market is a thrill for many customers and many of them appreciate the opportunity to meet and get to know the people growing the blooms. I've been fortunate to have an on-site farmers market where my dahlia farm is located and we face a very busy road off I-25 across from the Air Force Academy. Since I only grow dahlias and no other flower or filler, my customers have a chance to pick from hundreds of varieties and across the color spectrum - from the dreamy, creamy white to the dark and mysterious, almost black, dahlias. I get to know the names of the people who stop by weekly to get a bouquet and it's not uncommon for folks to stay and chat for awhile about a product and growing process they may or may not know much about.

If you have read my previous articles, you know that I appreciate a simpler bouquet style that let's the dahlia get all the attention. And you can see from my customer's smiles below that all of the forms - the balls, formal decoratives, catcus styles, etc. - are loved for their stunning beauty and inherent theatrics. My tribe doesn't seem to mind an untraditional approach to selling dahlias - no other flowers or fillers and not wrapped with plastic or paper. Dahlias go home in a tall cup of water with flower food that fits the vehicle's cup holder, with instructions to keep away from sun, heat and ripening fruit. And while I try and put varieties together that I think look good (remember my aunt Kathy's invention of All That Diva Jazz - All The Jazz and Diva varieties together?), almost always, the customer picks out individual dahlias they are drawn to, even if they aren't in the same color family. Everyone is unique and they want a unique dahlia bouquet.

DAHLIA LOVE



Customers enjoying their dahlias!

As you might expect, I was delighted to learn that Wayne Lobaugh and the ADS Cut Flower Committee have introduced a new show class - **Farmers Market Bunch** (being renamed to Dahlia Market Bunch). According to the website, a "farmer's market bunch" typically refers to a bundle or arrangement of freshly cut flowers sold by local farmers or growers at a farmer's market. Farmer's market bunches are prized for their freshness, seasonal variety, and often for their sustainability and support of local agriculture. This category will focus specifically on these bunches utilizing dahlias.

As a member of the [Colorado Dahlia Society](#), I have won several amateur competitions. While taking a plaque home is fun, the reason I like putting my dahlias on the show bench is for the opportunity to learn more about the flowers I am growing. Once you start going to shows, the shared knowledge of the attendees and the understanding of why judges make their decisions is invaluable information that will expand your expertise and appreciation of our beloved dahlia. Regardless of whether or not you want to be a dahlia judge yourself, the ADS Judging Modules are terrific. I finished the 16 modules last year and plan to revisit them again - they are that good and I can do them on my own timeline. You can access the modules under the Members Only section of the [ADS website](#), and after you log in (login can be found on page 37 of the April 2025 Bulletin), scroll down to Judging and Show, then to the ADS Judges Training Modules, then proceed to the modules.



DAHLIAS AT THE FARMERS MARKET

At first I wondered if I would have to grow other types of flowers in order to enter into the new show class of the Dahlia Market Bunch but then I read the categories and realized that I, too, can be included:

- Can either be single color/variety bunches or a mixed bunch category
- Can be a single variety or multiple varieties
- Can be either a 5 stem or 10 stem bunch

You may be wondering why this new category is necessary? Here is a short excerpt from Wayne Lobaugh: "Many things in our world have changed since COVID. Because we were forced to stay home many people started gardening. Some of these gardeners have found that they can make money selling their extra vegetables and cut flowers. I am sure that it is not news to most of you that the dahlia is one of the most popular flowers for the folks that are selling cut flowers. At Lobaugh's Dahlias well over sixty percent of our sells are to cut flower growers.

Last fall we started working on a definition for a cut flower bunch with the intent of it becoming a class in our dahlia shows. Not a mandatory class but a class that a society could add to their show if they chose to. If your society is like mine, you have seen an increase in membership and many of your new members sell cut flowers. At this time, we have produced a score sheet that will help judges award prizes to the show exhibits. There are things on the score sheet that are counter-intuitive to those of us that are ADS judges, because of this we are in the process of making a video on how to judge a "Farmers Market Bunch." If you want to or have already added the class to your show but have questions on how to judge it please contact the cut flower committee at cut-flowers@dahlia.org."



Alpen Sundown Dahlia

If you are planning on attending the ADS National Show in Chicago in September, tickets are going fast so don't delay! In addition to showing dahlias, you can also enter in your photos. Here is the [web page link](#) to the photography competition rules. If you would like to see the photo winners from 2024, you can view Larry Smith's [video here](#).



Winning vase entry





Graphics by Vida Wu

[Registration is open!](#)

Plan to join us September 18 - 22, 2025!

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



