

WRITING A SUCCESSFUL PRESS RELEASE

American Dahlia Society - Promoting the Dahlia

A press release resembles an actual news story. It is written to convince a reporter or an editor that a particular story is newsworthy. The media doesn't exist to give out publicity. They want to provide interesting stories for their audience. Don't hand them an advertisement or sales pitch. With some thought you can help them while helping your cause.

Think about why you want press coverage - and who your target audience should be. Newspapers have sections appealing to different segments of the population. Generally news stories that include people are easier to sell to a newspaper. Garden magazines may have longer articles – and specific plant types are often featured.

Develop a contact list. Decide which media best serves your purpose. Note which reporters and writers handle stories similar to the one that you want to tell. You can find this by watching gardening segments on the news, checking local newspapers and magazines for articles or by using the internet. You are identifying specific people to receive your message. If possible, cultivate these people before a major event where you need their help. It is also very important to learn what the media deadline is for them to act on your story. Ask if you don't know.

Write your press release. Keep it short and concise. Write using third person (don't use I or we). Use a title that will grab the reader's attention. A subtitle can help you to expand on your idea. The first – or lead – paragraph includes the who, what, when, where and how of your story. The following paragraphs elaborate on your story and provide contact information and links to additional information. Two pages are o.k. – one page is better. Do you have pictures to go with your story? Adding some great photos will make your story more likely to get printed.

Deliver your message. A press release can be emailed, faxed or sent by U.S. mail or be part of a press kit. Using the organization's logo adds credibility. A one page cover letter is sometimes added to pique interest in your story. Photos can be mailed or made available on a website. Have copies of your press release available at your show when appropriate. Make the press's job easy. They will be happy to work with you.