

THE PRESCRIPTION FOR DAHLIA GARDENS FREE FROM VIRUS

While we are still a long way away from thoroughly understanding virus in dahlias, there is enough knowledge in place for us to be able to largely eliminate virus in our dahlia gardens. The research and the analytical work at Washington State University have provided the foundation for the prescription for that success.

The first key step in the process is to start with clean stock. Ideally, that stock would have been taken from plants tested in the previous season and found to be virus free. The availability of known, clean stock is very limited but is growing. See the programs below on how you can help in that regard. The second-best stock would be the tubers from the very best-looking plants in your garden last year. Do not use (or save!) tubers from weak plants or plants with suspicious foliage. (See the ADS and WSU websites for examples of foliage indicative of virus.)

The critical next step in managing and protecting your garden is to prevent the transfer of virus from an infected plant to clean plants. The only way to do that is to disinfect your working tools between plants. Details are available on the ADS website, but the 10% bleach solution followed by the Dawn dish soap solution works well for me. That approach provides a double hit on the virus and avoids potential corrosion problems on the tools. An important corollary here is that you should pull out and discard plants with suspicious foliage. (If in doubt, throw it out!)

At the end of the season, select only the very best plants for harvesting tubers. Rigorously adhere to the disinfecting process for digging and, in particular, for dividing the tubers. If you process the clumps relatively soon after digging, it is probably not essential to disinfect the shovels used in digging. However, if the ends of tubers are cut in the process, they should be recut with disinfected tools as soon as possible. It is essential, of course, to disinfect the tools used to divide the clumps.

There is ample evidence that adhering to the foregoing practices will go a long way to achieving a dahlia garden with little or no virus.

You Can Help to Generate Clean Stock!

Dahlia Clubs: The ADS will cover half the cost of testing a basic set of 30 samples provided from each of our associated societies. The objective of the project is to increase the availability of clean stock in 2021. Take the following steps to participate:

- Identify a manager of the project for the club.
- Review the details of the project on the ADS website.
- Confirm participation at baronminer@aol.com.
- Propagate the tubers from the clean plants for 2021.

Vendors: The ADS will continue to provide the free and confidential testing of a limited number of leaf samples for our dahlia suppliers. The objectives of the program are to improve the availability of clean stock and instill the practices required to keep it clean.

- Review the details of the project on the website.
- Confirm participation at baronminer@aol.com

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