

Characteristics of the Dahlia: Desirable and Undesirable

When evaluating a cultivar, the judge must balance the good with the bad. Few dahlias, if any, possess all positive characteristics. Although the ADS scorecard lists some faults that a bloom may possess, the judge must also consider the strengths of a bloom and balance all attributes as they assign an overall point value.

COLOR (20 points)	
DESIRABLE	UNDESIRABLE
Overall	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear • Bright • Pure • Sparkling • Lustrous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dull/Gray • Impure • Blotchy/Coarse • Streaked • Veined
Blends	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth transition between colors • Harmonious or contrasting colors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneven • Clashing colors
Bicolors and Variegated	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even distribution of 2nd color • Good contrast • Sharp/distinct separation • Adequate amount 2nd color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneven • Poor contrast • Bleeds • Inadequate 2nd color
Multiple Blooms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform Color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bracts • Contrasting obvious petaloids • Wolf petals
Other Undesirable Faults	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBE Bruising • SBE Insect Injury • SBE Mildew 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conspicuous bracts • Fading, bruising • Spotting

FORM (30 points)	
DESIRABLE	UNDESIRABLE
Symmetry/Centers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round • Good proportion • Adequate height • Full • Tight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oval • Poor proportion • Too high, too low • Misshapen/bull nose • Multiple centers • Dished • Elongated / Oblong • Open (blown center) • Weak • Hard/green
Contour	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good build • Full petallage • Ideal ray floret arrangement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asymmetrical • Lopsided • Flicked floret • Gaps present • Rough/staghorn • Lacks ray florets
Fully Developed (SBE)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At peak of maturity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over mature • Immature
True to Form	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets ideal standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed form or does not meet ideal standard

SUBSTANCE (10 points)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Springiness and toughness of the flower parts • Firm, crisp, thick, stiff • Uniform back and face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ray florets soft, lack springiness, droopy • Not turgid • Ray florets missing, shriveled, thin, brown, dirty, misshapen • Overly mature, lack of substance affects symmetry and color

BLOOM POSITION (10 Points)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 degrees • Note: Top facing OK for Poms, MB, BA, and WL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Down facing • Side facing • Top facing on some forms (minor for AA & A sizes)

FOLIAGE (10 points)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean • Luxuriant color • Good proportion, artistic formation • Uniform size & form • Alternate & opposite • Turgid • Adequate amount 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dirty, unappealing • Pale, blotchy • Out-of-proportion, poor texture • Too small, too large • Wilted • Sparse • Coarse, bubbly • Folded, crinkled

STEM (10 points)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, erect, graceful, round • Straight • Good proportion: length & diameter • Even, smooth, circular in cross section • One color (minor if not) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak, willowy, rubbery, wiry • Irregular, crooked • Too long or too short • Too thin or too large • Misplaced spur leaf (minor)

JUDGING GUIDELINES				
Characteristic	100%	90%	85%	80%
Form	30	27.0	25.5	24.0
Color	20	18.0	17.0	16.0
Substance	10	9.0	8.5	8.0
Stem	10	9.0	8.5	8.0
Foliage	10	9.0	8.5	8.0
Bloom Position	10	9.0	8.5	8.0
Uniformity Floriferousness	10	9.0	8.5	8.0