

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	Total Value	Best 93%	Great 90%	Good 85%	Poor 80%
Form	30	28	27	25.5	24
Color	20	18.5	18	17	16
Substance	10	9.25	9	8.5	8
Stem	10	9.25	9	8.5	8
Foliage	10	9.25	9	8.5	8
Bloom Position	10	9.25	9	8.5	8
Uniformity Floriferousness	10	9.25	9	8.5	8