



The rainy, cold weather did not dampen the spirits of the Knoxville Dahlia Society for our April 8th meeting at the Loudon County home of member Anita Phillips known as Little Sparrow Farm. Although we were not able to take a tour of the farm, we had a very informative and interesting meeting inside the lovely Phillips farmhouse. Over 20 members participated and enjoyed an assortment of goodies and home-made fruit lemonades.

Our guest speaker was Senior Dahlia Judge Ray Phillips from The Tennessee Dahlia Society in Chattanooga, TN, who was accompanied by his wife Pat. Ray is a 32-year Dahlia grower and a wealth of information on all things Dahlia. Ray's own Dahlia, "Sidehill Trishie" which is named after his wife, is featured in the book *Floret Farm's Discovering Dahlias*.

Gathered around the large round farm table by the kitchen, Ray displayed plants in various stages of growth in pots and growing cells. He talked about Dahlia storage, waking, sprouting, fertilizing, disbudding, staking, and watering. Ray demonstrated various methods of taking cuttings, and how to pot them for new plants. Varieties of growing pots and seed trays were shown and discussed. Everyone gathered closer as Ray demonstrated identifying a tuber eye and splitting a clump.

Photos of his own gardens were shared that exhibited his tying and supporting methods. Techniques such as removing lower foliage and mounding up dirt around the stalks were discussed by the group, as well as Dahlia pests and how to treat them. Everyone came away from the meeting benefiting from Ray's wealth of knowledge and willingness to share.

The Knoxville Dahlia Society is extremely fortunate to have Kristine Moody as our charter President. From a young age Kristine spent time in her great-grandma's Italian kitchen garden learning the value and joy of growing food and flowers. She further developed her love of nature by earning her PhD in genetics and species conservation of at-risk waterfall-climbing Hawaiian fish. Yes, you read that correctly, fish that climb waterfalls. So crazy!

During this time she began her own garden adventure and discovered the lovely and genetically complex Dahlia. Over the past six years Kristine has quickly gone from growing a handful of Dahlias in her front yard that fought to survive the trampling of two Newfoundland dogs, to having an urban flower farm in Knoxville, TN with hundreds of Dahlias. She definitely got bitten by the Dahlia bug!

Kristine is still a professional fish geneticist by day but you could say she is a Dahlia farmer-geneticist every other hour of the day as she focuses her flower efforts on hybridization and breeding new cultivars of Dahlias. Through these efforts and loads of flowers, Kristine has brought beauty and joy to her community, especially when it was most needed during the pandemic.

As the President of the Knoxville Dahlia Society (established April 2023) she hopes to further the spreading of joy through flowers and foster a society founded in shared enthusiasm for the Dahlia, friendship, and fellowship.