

2021-22 Garden Lecture Series

Dahlias and Begonias

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Gardening with Dahlias

Someone once said that peonies are the “Show Girls” of the spring garden; with dahlias, it’s all about late summer-early fall “Royalty”! Following a brief history of the discovery of dahlias, you will learn how to select dahlia tubers, where to plant, how to water and fertilize. To stake or not to stake, to dig or not to dig – these are the questions! If you dig tubers, how to store, overwinter, and then how to wake them up and perhaps make cuttings. A discussion of American Dahlia Society Classification and how to enter a dahlia show will follow.

Dahlias – Winter: What to Do

Winter is the time to plan and prepare for spring planting, check stored tubers and tuber shopping. Did you know that dahlia seeds planted inside can, in a single growing season, produce both blooms and tubers? Tubers started inside can give a head start and serve as a source of cuttings. Demonstrations will include tuber and seed starting, and how-to taking cuttings.

Dahlias – Spring: What to Do

Spring is the time to plant tubers and tend to young plants, cuttings and seedlings. It’s important to plan fertilizing, watering, pinching, pruning, and staking so that you will be rewarded with gorgeous blooms until frost. Demonstrations will show you how to pinch prune and stake.

Dahlias – Summer: What to Do

Enjoying your dahlia garden is the best part of mid to late summer. A well-deserved reward for all of your effort. This is the time to evaluate your dahlias and start planning for next year. What variety was unexpectedly beautiful, what wasn’t? Which ones will you save? It’s also time to enter a dahlia show. Demonstrations will show how to evaluate a bloom and prepare for a dahlia show.

Dahlias – Fall: What to Do

Fall chores get into high gear with the first hard frost. Will you dig and divide? Do you have a place to store your tubers? A discussion of storage options and tuber dividing demonstration will follow. Soil health is crucial to dahlia success, planning a soil test in late fall will be discussed. It’s not too early to start shopping; many choice tubers are sold out by Christmas!

Fancy-Leaved Begonias . . . But, What About the Flowers?

This program will provide a brief history of the discovery of this large genus and will include what makes a begonia a begonia. Participants will be introduced to a diverse group of begonias grown primarily for foliage. They will learn how to grow and propagate. A discussion and demonstration of old-fashion varieties and new hybrids will include examples of species and some beautiful flowering hybrids.

A Begonia for Any Season

This program will feature how to grow begonias both inside and out. Far from ordinary, begonias are wonderful houseplants; many make lovely terrarium specimens. As winter wanes and we think about spring, begonias as bedding and container plants are a beautiful addition to any garden. Fall brings cooler weather and is the time to think about bringing plants inside and perhaps taking a few cuttings. With the holidays, it’s time for “winter-flowering” and fancy-leaved hybrids to enjoy while waiting for spring.

How to Grow and Show a Blue-Ribbon Begonia

This program will describe how to plan for and enter your favorite begonia into an American Begonia Society or another flower show. In addition to submitting a well-grown plant, growers need to know how entries are classified for judging and become familiar with show rules and schedules. By becoming familiar with the show schedule, you can optimize your chances for success. Demonstrations will illustrate strategies for growing and entering prize-winning begonias.

Plant Parenthood

This program focuses on propagation of popular houseplants. Various techniques such as stem, leaf and petiole cuttings will be demonstrated. Houseplants pruning, and grooming will also be discussed. Tips on early Spring propagation of popular summer bedding plants will also be included.

Tiny Terrarium Workshop

In this workshop participants will learn the steps necessary to make and maintain a terrarium. They will then assemble a terrarium in a glass bowl or stemless wine glass. All materials will be provided.

Details

Each lecture consists of

- A 60-minute interactive PowerPoint presentation and a two-page resource handout for each attendee
- In-person lecture – demonstration plants, one or two plants to give away or raffle
- **Zoom** presentation – I have a Zoom account and can serve as Zoom host

Requirements

- In-person lecture - electric outlet and projection screen or white background
- In-person lecture LCD projector - If the meeting space **does not** have a projector **I will supply**
- Lecture fee: \$300 for in-person presentation \$250 for **Zoom** presentation
- Workshop: \$25 per person (minimum 10), under 75 miles, no mileage charge

Betsy Szymczak – Biosketch

I am an avid outdoor vegetable and flower gardener. I started growing dahlias 15 years ago. Today I am a member of the American Dahlia Society (ADS), Rhode Island, Connecticut and New England Dahlia Societies and am ADS accredited judge.

I also grow begonias primarily as houseplants. I am an American Begonia Society certified begonia judge and ABS Judging Co-Chair. I have judged begonia sections at the Philadelphia, Boston and Newport RI flower shows and am a student judge for the Gesneriad Society. I have also volunteered at the Lyman Estate Greenhouses. I am in the 2021 MA Master Gardener Training Program. I am a retired college professor, having taught clinical microbiology at several Boston area colleges and universities for over 35 years