




# NEWSLETTER

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## WELCOME!

**We thought we would start the new season by producing a Newsletter for our members. Karen Forrester (Show Secretary) starts us off with reports on the 2022 Early and Late shows. Photos from the shows and details of our shows are on our Facebook page and on our Website (links/details at the top of the page). Neal Hatch talks about the new dahlia varieties he tried in 2021 and 2022, followed by a short piece on the staging rings he has been testing as a replacement for floral foams. If you would like to contribute to a future Newsletter then please get in touch!**

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## EARLY SHOW REPORT by Karen Forrester

*Yeovil & District Chrysanthemum and Dahlia Society held their open early show the weekend of 17th & 18th September. After a break for 2 years, the society was pleased to hold the show again, particularly as it was celebrating the 60th show that the society had held. Although the weather had been somewhat unkind to exhibitors, it was good to see a decent entry in both the dahlia and chrysanthemum classes.*



The Southwest of England Dahlia Championship was supported by 3 entries. The judges awarded the 1st prize to Darren Hickling of Midsomer Norton for his entry of Twilight Boy, Sheval Megan and Mary Margaret Rose. A new trophy had kindly been gifted to us by Chris Burnett and this was won by Roger Downting for his entry of Polventon Kristobel and Roger's Choice. Roger also went on to win the 60th Anniversary Prize along with the NDS Silver and Bronze Medal.

Although numbers were down on the Chrysanthemum entries, it was wonderful to see such a fantastic display of quality blooms. The Southwest of England Championship was won by Fred Swabey from Plymouth for his entry of Yellow and Primrose Billy Bell. Fred was also awarded the NCS Silver Medal and the NCS Certificate of Merit. John Cockwill of Okehampton was awarded the supreme championship along with the NCS Bronze Medal. The medium championship was won by Roger Gulley for his entry of Salmon Wingfield, Rita Fix & Yellow Wingfield. Harry Godden took home the Westland Trophy for his 3 vases of exhibition sprays in the spray championship.

The society would like to thank all exhibitors and the judges that made this a successful show.

## LATE SHOW REPORT by Karen Forrester



***Yeovil & District Chrysanthemum and Dahlia Society held their open late show the weekend of 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> November. The show also incorporated the ever-popular dahlia tuber sale. Although numbers were down on the Chrysanthemum entries, it was wonderful to see such a fantastic display of quality blooms.***

The Supreme Championship for The Lush Cup, was won by Ivor Mace for his fantastic entry of Louisiana, Fairweather and Mancetta Symbol. The judges also awarded Ivor, The Aldon Cup for his entry of 6 large exhibition blooms. The cultivars entered were Peggy Ann / Duke of Kent / Primrose Jessie / Pink Duke of Kent / Silver Gigantic / Louisiana

Ivor's success continued as he was also awarded the National Chrysanthemum Silver and Bronze medals and The Hamblet Trophy for the Best Vase in Show of Primrose Jessie

Harry Godden was awarded 3 cups by the judges. The Denning Cup was presented for his entry of 6 Medium Exhibition - Trident / Lundy / Yellow Lundy. Harry also went on to be awarded The Diment Rose Bowl for his entry of 3 Vases, 3 blooms Incurved, in which he exhibited the cultivar Sheila Harris. The Brigham Cup is awarded for the best entry of 3 vases, 3 blooms per vase of Reflexed or Intermediate. Harry received this cup for his entry of Cream, Yellow & White Fairweather.

The Joyce Trophy for best vase of singles and The OA Wildes Trophy for 3 vases of singles were won by Chris Bond. Chris exhibited Primrose Kath Stephenson & Rose Kath Stephenson.

The Batten Cup is awarded to the winner of Class 19 for 3 vases Singles Large. The judges awarded this to Ron & Dianne Benfield. Ron & Dianne Benfield were also awarded the Arthur Bicknell Memorial Trophy and the National Chrysanthemum Certificate of Merit

Brian Pople won the Joe Thomas Cup for the best exhibit in the anemone classes with his entry of Ruby Mundial / Apricot Mundial / Peach Mundial

The Show Committee Cup was won by Harry Godden who gained the most points in the show.

The show committee would like to thank all exhibitors, our judges, Gary Dando & Alan Rakes, the sponsors, and all people that attended the show and brought tubers. Without all your support we would not be able to continue running the shows.

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## **'NEW' DAHLIA VARIETIES GROWN FOR THE 2021 & 2022 SEASONS by Neal Hatch**

***I grow small numbers of dahlias in their first year with me. This allows me to see how they grow – providing enough blooms for a vase or two – before I decide whether to grow more in subsequent years. I tried quite a few new experimental varieties in 2021 and 2022 (probably too many!) – partly in response to the lockdown and not knowing whether shows were going to be on or off. We all struggled to cope with sustained near 40-degree temperatures this year, so it is difficult to draw firm conclusions on the new varieties.***

***Josudi Hercules stood out for me as a cactus type that could stand the heat – and with relatively little fading (it was grown uncovered). My other standout new dahlia would be a close-run choice between Skelmersdale Jayne and Twilight Boy. Because of its lower growth habit, I suspect that Twilight Boy will be the better choice for my growing conditions. But all three will be on my 'banker's' list for 2023. I'll be making space for Roger's Choice and Fred Swabey – many thanks to Roger Downting for bringing these along to our fantastic 2022 tuber sale!***



*Twilight Boy at Cornwall 2022*



*Skelmersdale Jane in the garden*

New dahlias released in 2022 by Halls of Heddon included **Ryecroft Porcelain** (miniature decorative) and **Eastwood Jane** (small semi-cactus) and they caught my eye. I also wanted to try **Twilight Boy** and **Skelmersdale Jayne** (both miniature decorative) which were 2021 Halls releases. Due to space constraints, Ryecroft Porcelain drew the short straw and was rather tucked away at the back of a shady border, so I've not had a proper chance to evaluate it for showing. But early blooms looked well-formed and appeared to stand the hot weather. It made very poor tubers. Eastwood Jane was another new release by Halls in 2022 after doing well in the Leeds NDS Trials. After a promising start, the short compact plants looked very healthy, but the hot weather tended to 'cook' the blooms before they were fully open, and the form didn't look great mid-season. I will try again next year, in small numbers. Twilight Boy was stopped a little later so perhaps took advantage of cooler weather later in the season. It had six competitive outings for me – including as part of my Championship winning entry at the Cornwall Dahlia Society show. A personal favourite of mine this year, I have been impressed with it and aim to grow in greater numbers in 2022. It is a shortish compact plant – good for my exposed garden. It had a bit of shading over it but no rain cover. It doesn't seem to want to throw up a big flush of stems all at once, rather it naturally seems to want to push up a sequence of stems. It produced fantastic tubers on first-year plants. Twilight Boy was only narrowly beaten as my top miniature decorative by Skelmersdale Jayne. Skelmersdale Jayne is another new dahlia to me this year – though only grown in small numbers and used in mixed display exhibits. I'll be growing it again next year, despite its tall height. **Barbary Alana** was my third miniature decorative this year (new to me in 2021 from Barry Davies) and has had a bit of an on/off year – mostly being used in display classes with other varieties. Despite that, it was only just behind Skelmersdale Jayne and Twilight Boy in picking up prize cards this year. It was new to me in 2021 when I took it to Wisley and was first in the 3 vases of 3 miniature decorative blooms. Sadly, it looks to have made poor tubers this season. These three varieties have completely eclipsed **Dikara Superb** in my garden this year.



*Josudi Hercules at Taunton 2022*

**Josudi Hercules** (miniature cactus) is not a new release (2017), but was new to me in 2022. My stock of **Weston Pirate** looked tired, so I decided to try Josudi Hercules and **Ryecroft Pixie**. Josudi Hercules was shown 12 times this year and was my second-best performing variety this year (just behind small decorative Sheval Megan). Pixie did not like the hot weather and the leaves got scorched, so it was a write-off as far as showing was concerned. I don't think I'll be growing it in 2023, and have decided to try another Josudi to join Hercules.

**Barbary Mystery** (miniature ball, new from Barry Davies in 2021) was another variety that looked promising last year when grown in small numbers but it really didn't like the hot weather this year. It recovered late in the season, but too late for the shows, and probably won't make it to my starting line-up for the miniature ball class next year – I will rely heavily on the Jomanda's.

**Barbary Dove Cliffs** won the specimen bloom class at Dorset County Show and it looks promising in the small ball class. It didn't mind the heat and sits on strong straight stems. But it is *extremely* tall – probably too tall for my exposed garden. I've been told that it is not a good tuber maker – but this proved not to be the case for me this year. I've grown small ball **Westerton Pearl** (2020) for three years, and this was a good year, but some way behind the ubiquitous **Blyton Softer Gleam**.

For small decorative classes, I struggle to grow **Diane's (Winholme & Cream)** in my garden as they don't seem to do well in the exposed positions, so I have tended to grow **Ryecroft Brenda T** and **Sheval Megan** instead. Cream Diane had another failure in 2022. But I'd mention **Ryecroft Gold** (small decorative, 2020) as a promising variety from 2021 – with rock-solid stems and good form & colour. It hasn't had many outings for me this year, as I relied heavily on Sheval Megan in this division. Ryecroft Gold did well for me in the 2021 season including at Taunton & Melplash, although it tends towards the miniature rather than small. I have not tried **Tracy Diane** (2021) yet. I tried some new (to me) collerette varieties – **Asphire Fancy** and **Asphire Julie** from the JRG Dahlias stable. The weather really wasn't kind to any of my collerettes, so it was not a good year to evaluate them.



## CAN WE REPLACE FLORAL FOAM CONTAINING PLASTIC? By Neal Hatch

*I designed and developed a 'staging ring' in late 2021. The rings provide a fully reusable alternative to floral foams – particularly those foams containing plastic (which were banned at some RHS shows in 2021).*

I had the idea of a reusable 'staging ring' many years ago, but didn't have the technology to do anything about it until 3D printers became available to hobbyists relatively recently. I was after something that would last as long as my plastic vases, many of which are now 40 years old and still going strong. Also, I was becoming increasingly aware of the problems with microplastic in the environment and wanted to minimise my use of *single-use* plastic such as floral foam. I stopped using green floral foam in 2019 – before the RHS ban was announced. I started to use some of the so-called 'biodegradable' foams, including at the 2019 NDS National. It remains unclear just how 'biodegradable' these are in normal home use. I moved on to use the newly developed fully compostable fibre/foam products in 2021 (made from basalt), including at the 2021 NDS National. These products can be composted at home. I was disappointed with these products and moved on to produce reusable staging rings for the 2022 season. My staging rings are made from Polylactic Acid or PLA (a bio-plastic often made from corn starch).



The rings were developed very late in 2021 so I had little opportunity to try them that year. I used the winter to design and produce a set of rings that I could use for showing my many types of flowers – with different sizes and arrangements of holes. This close-up of one of the ring types has room for three large/giant stems or three miniature/small stems – as used here for three miniature cactus dahlias. The stems are locked in place using some stem offcuts.



I've entered various shows across Somerset, Dorset and Cornwall this summer and have now staged almost 250 competitive vases of flowers using staging rings. Most of these vases have been dahlias. This photo shows my Championship entry at our early Yeovil Chrysanthemum & Dahlia show, but I have also exhibited daffodils, gladioli, and various other annuals and perennials. I also used them at the Sweet Pea National Show at Wisley in June. I have used the odd block of fully compostable floral/fibre foam over the course of the season – for large display containers – but for no more than a dozen exhibits.

I found the rings easy to use when staging my flowers, as all you do is cut an offcut of dahlia stem to lock the blooms into their desired position, having chosen the correct-sized staging ring for the blooms you are exhibiting. They are not perfect and I have had the odd recalcitrant bloom slip – but this was usually due to operator error in not wedging it firmly enough! No staging technique or material is completely foolproof.

The rings are particularly good when it comes to packing up at the end of the show as there are no waste products other than the old blooms and water! I won't claim that they are better or faster than using traditional green foams – there are pros and cons. But I have decided I don't want to use floral foams that might break down into micro plastic, and I also prefer using my staging rings to any of the new fully-compostable foam/fibre materials that I have tried so far. The bonus is that over time the staging rings will also save me money – as there are no boxes of foam to buy!

I can't imagine going back to green foam now, and I'll be looking forward to using the rings again next year!

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### DATES FOR 2023

Chrysanthemum & Dahlia Show	16 <sup>th</sup> & 17 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
Western Group N.C.S Show	17 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
Chrysanthemum Show & Dahlia Tuber Sale	18 <sup>th</sup> & 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2023