





NEWSLETTER

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 <https://somersetgardening.wixsite.com/ydcds>

No.2 August 2023

WELCOME!

As the new season gathers pace we hope your dahlia and chrysanthemum plants are doing well. We hope to see you at our shows in the Autumn. In this, our second newsletter, Karen Forrester talks about how she got started growing dahlias. Neal Hatch talks about the chrysanthemums he grows for general cut flower use. We also touch on the dreaded issue of gall – a hot topic at the moment if the NDS Facebook page is to be believed. **Please note the change in venue for our shows.** If you would like to contribute to a future Newsletter then please get in touch!

2023 YEOVIL SHOWS

Yeovil & District Chrysanthemum and Dahlia Society will hold their open early show the weekend of 16th & 17th September, and their late show and tuber sale on 18th & 19th November.

Please come along and support us at the shows, either as an exhibitor or if you just want to take a look at the blooms and maybe buy a tuber or two at the tuber sale.

We have had to make a late change to the venue for the 2023 Early & Late shows. The shows will now be held at Marston Magna Village Hall, rather than at our usual venue (Holy Trinity Scout Hall, as originally advertised in the published schedule and on Facebook and our Website). As a consequence, we've had to adjust some of the staging times etc. Updated details are now on our Website/Facebook. If you have any questions about the new venue or times, please do get in touch.

Please contact us if you need a paper copy of the schedule. But electronic copies are easily accessible on our website – just click on this link and the green button will take you to the schedule....

<https://somersetgardening.wixsite.com/ydcds>

**YEOVIL & DISTRICT
CHRYSANTHEMUM & DAHLIA SOCIETY**



Schedule of Classes
2023

**61st OPEN EARLY
CHRYSANTHEMUM
& DAHLIA SHOW**

Saturday 16th September, 2–4.30pm
Sunday 17th September, 2–4.30pm

- and -

**77th OPEN LATE
CHRYSANTHEMUM SHOW
& DAHLIA TUBER SALE**

Saturday 18th November, 2–4.30pm
Sunday 19th November, 2–4.30pm

- at -

*****NEW VENUE*****

MARSTON MAGNA VILLAGE HALL

Yeovil Road, Marston Magna, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 8BY

Admission £1 Refreshments Free Parking




**THE
GARDENS
GROUP**
CASTLE | BRIMSMORE | FOUNDBURY

HOW I GOT STARTED by Karen Forrester

For the 2023 season I am growing 95 plants and am looking forward to the coming showing season with eagerness and enthusiasm! But how did I get into growing and showing dahlias?

My love of dahlia's really began in 2016. My father, a now retired professional gardener, had always shown chrysanthemums, daffodils, sweet peas and vegetables and the odd dahlia. My closest friend was getting married in September 2016 and asked if dad and I could provide dahlia's for her bouquet, button holes and to decorate the marquee. This is where the dahlia growing began and I became hooked!

The following year, I began growing about 25 plants. Mainly poms, small and min decs and small balls. *Willows Violet* (pom), *Blyton Softer Gleam*, *Ryecroft Brenda T* and *Ruskin Myra* were the main varieties. The flowers grew well and I decided that I would enter my first show at Street in Somerset.

I cannot recollect the classes I entered except the novice class. I arrived at Crispin Hall thinking I had the best flowers ever. However, this illusion was short-lived as on entering the hall I was met with Roger Downting and Christine Tomkins flowers. I had never seen so many perfect dahlias, all of which had been transported with the greatest of care, tied to small stakes (using tights) and then placed in buckets.

I will always remember my first conversation with Christine Tomkins, was when I asked her how many dahlias she grew. Her response was over 200! Although feeling slightly deflated, I set about displaying my blooms – the result of the novice class the following day was a 1st place – I was ecstatic!

The following year, I decided to aim big. I was going to enter the National Dahlia Show at Wisley. My father thought I was insane, but I was determined.

My number of blooms being grown jumped to 85. I had done some research over the previous season and decided I needed a lot of new varieties so had great enjoyment in browsing the catalogue from Halls of Heddon and buying 'all that I liked the colour of'!

The national show is always held at the beginning of September. I had a couple of small village shows at the end of August, but my main aim for 2018 was to show flowers at Wisley.

There are lots of different classes at the national. As I had not previously shown before, I entered the novice classes along with an open class – The 100 plant and under challenge.

Now Wisley is not like your usual shows – it is big. However, all the competitors made me feel really welcome. Staging takes place from early evening and most of them stage through the night. I staged my few blooms and retreated for the night with not much hope for the following day!

To improve my knowledge the NDS had kindly allowed me to steward with the judges the following morning. I would highly recommend this to anyone that is interested in showing and gaining further knowledge. The judges are very experienced and are always willing to answer any questions.

It is very hard not to go and look and see how your blooms had fared with the judges, but I managed to contain myself until the end.

The shock and surprise to find out I had achieved a first and 2 seconds at my first national show will stay with me for a very long time. The result of the 100 plant challenge also resulted in me winning a bronze medal. 100 Plant Challenge – *Blyton Softer Gleam*, *Ryecroft Brenda T* and *Ruskin Andrea*.



The following year, on entering the same class, I achieved my ultimate goal of winning the class and being awarded the NDS silver medal.

My love for dahlia's still continues although at times the frustrations of losing tubers over the winter, the British weather and the annoyance at not have the perfect blooms ready for the shows, sometimes makes me think about stopping growing. Now for 2023 and I am growing 95 plants and am looking forward to the coming showing season with eagerness and enthusiasm!

SHEEPS WOOL AVAILABLE

- DO YOU WANT A NATURAL PRODUCT TO REPEL SLUGS AND SNAIL?

- DO YOU WANT A NATURAL PRODUCT WHICH SLOWLY RELEASES NITROGEN INTO THE SOIL?

- DO YOU WANT A NATURAL INSULATING OR MULCHING PRODUCT?



IF THE ANSWER TO ANY OF THE ABOVE IS YES, I HAVE SHEEPS FLEECES FOR SALE.
COLLECTION FROM BUTLEIGH WOOTTON OR EITHER OF THE SOCIETY SHOWS.
PLEASE EMAIL karen.forrester291@btinternet.com or call 07789 434029 FOR FURTHER DETAILS

WATCH OUT, GALL ABOUT!

Anyone who keeps an eye on the NDS Facebook page can't help but notice the myriad of questions about leafy and crown gall (and pictures of). This is not the place for an in-depth analysis of gall. There is plenty of help and advice out there, for example, <https://www.rhs.org.uk/disease/leafy-gall>. But it is worth reiterating a few points.

Gall seems to be widespread in the environment – you may have seen it on your rose bush or on a birch tree (a witch's broom). It is not clear (to me) whether it is more prevalent than it used to be, or whether it is just that social media platforms allow us to read about it more easily than before! In any event, dahlias are susceptible to gall. If you see something like this on your tuber when started into growth, then you have gall.

It is a bacterial disease, rather than a virus. As others have said, the best action is to destroy the infected dahlia plant/tuber if you see it, and certainly don't put it on your compost heap – and risk spreading it to your other plants. Good plant hygiene is the key. If taking cuttings from dahlia tubers, definitely avoid such tubers! But also make sure you clean/sterilise your cutting knife between visibly healthy tubers where possible, just in case! Some people advocate a draconian approach to ground sterilisation if infected tubers are found when digging up tubers at the end of the season.

I'd love to know a bit more about the lifecycle of the bacteria, so aim to do some more reading of the literature. Can it, for example, survive in some of the green recycling composts we now use, as others have speculated? Is it widespread around the garden and it is just a case of bad luck that a plant succumbs to it? Is it the already weakened/damaged plants where the bacteria gain a foothold – as with many plant diseases?



CHRYSANTHEMUMS FROM THE GARDEN by Neal Hatch

We see some fantastic Chrysanthemum exhibits at both our early and late shows. The Yeovil Committee is rather short of Chrysanthemum expertise at the moment, so if anyone wants to join us to lend a hand that would be fantastic! In the meantime, I have written a few notes on what I get up to on the chrysanthemum side of things – just for fun rather than serious growing!

I have exhibited (and had medal success) at early Chrysanthemums shows in the past. I exhibited a few incurve, intermediate and reflex varieties at shows in southern Hampshire in the late 1980s. But I stopped growing & showing chrysanthemums seriously when I moved to London for work. I don't currently grow chrysanthemums to exhibit at specialist Chrysanthemum shows like our own at Yeovil. But I still enjoy growing a few plants of early chrysanthemum varieties in the garden (*Courtier*, *Wembley*, *Thoroughbred*, *Max Riley*), primarily for the house. A few blooms occasionally make it on the show bench! Here we see 3 blooms of *Wembley* (3b) making an early season appearance in a mixed display at Mid-Somerset Show in August 2019.



I always love to have a few early sprays around for the house and to use them for the odd show vase. These three sprays of *Lucy*, looking a bit bedraggled after very heavy rain, were shown at Clutton Autumn Show in 2022. My chrysanthemum plants are not covered so they have to put up with whatever the weather throws at them – heavy rain and/or baking temperatures. *Lucy* had a couple of other outings as part of a mixed display 'top-vase' classes at the Castle Cary and Melplash shows in 2022. For the 2023 season, I am growing sprays *Lucy*, *Chatsworth*, *Karen Tayler* and *Gold Bullion*.

Most of my experience has been in growing early ones, but I have grown the odd 'late' bloom, though not to the high quality seen at Yeovil Late Show! That is something for me to aspire to in a future year, perhaps, but at the moment I don't have the spare facilities to house many plants when they are brought in from a summer outside. This year I will be growing a few plants of anemone *Jill Anderton* and the single *Mason's Bronze*. I also grow a few plants of the bright yellow late spray *Vibrant* – which we love having in the house on dark

November/December days. Usually, chrysanthemums are the last cut flowers we have for the year – and it all starts again after Christmas!

I usually take my chrysanthemum cuttings very early (from early February) in a finely choreographed shuffle within the greenhouse – to make way for the myriad of other plants I need to find space to grow under cover.

DAHLIA TUBERS FOR NEWCOMERS

We are planning to produce a leaflet in the autumn explaining what to do with the tubers we sell at our Late Show. This is aimed at those new to growing dahlias. We hope to have it available for people to pick up when they buy their tubers.

REMINDER OF DATES FOR 2023

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