

# Mid Island Dahlia Society

Long Island, NY

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## 2001 ADS NATIONAL SHOW

**Over the years**, the National Show of the American Dahlia Society has evolved from an annual proceeding in New York to a special occasion that rotates among dahlia societies, each of which may be the host only once a decade or even once a generation. In the transition from annual to very occasional hosting, the planning horizon has lengthened. From a three year horizon a few years ago, ADS now selects host societies for the National Show five years in advance.

As the Mid Island Dahlia Society finished its preparations for the first ADS National Show in New York in since the 50th Anniversary Show in 1965, the terrorist attacks on September 11, only three days before the beginning of the show, brought the organizers into uncharted territory. While sports and entertainment organizations cancelled or postponed events across the country, the Mid Island Dahlia Society met to decide how to proceed. One cannot postpone a National Dahlia Show for a month the way one could reschedule sports events.

The debate raged over the Internet as the leaders of the Mid Island Dahlia Society consulted with ADS executives and the office of the Governor of New York. Any decision was risky and exposed the Mid Island Dahlia Society and ADS to potential criticism? Yet the Mid Island Dahlia Society had only one day to decide.

With urging from the Governor of New York, the society decided to proceed with the National Show and only to cancel one event, a Thursday evening harbor cruise. In proceeding with the National Show, the Mid Island Dahlia Society had little time to change the focus. Anything humorous would be inappropriate while smoke still poured into the sky from the rubble of the former World Trade Center only a few miles away. Many members of local dahlia societies

Of course, with all local airports and some bridges through New York closed for several days, dozens of members were unable to reach the show. However, a number of excellent exhibitors from Ontario and Nova Scotia drove up to 18 hours and endured long lines at the Canadian border to bring outstanding blooms. Members from as far west as Indiana, as far south as the Washington, DC area, and all over the northeast brought whatever they could. The result was 2198 blooms on display, enough to fill a large exhibition hall with beautiful blooms.

With the unsettled conditions, plus extended drought in many portions of the eastern U.S. and Canada, quality was more variable than one would have wished. Among most fully double sizes and types, the best blooms were very high in quality. Interestingly, the open centered types seemed to suffer the most in quality, perhaps because most exhibitors in the Northeast do not grow what they commonly call, "other types".

Considering that growers south of New York and in many parts of the Midwest were complaining all season about one of the worst growing seasons in memory, it was impressive to have most of the show deep in high quality blooms. The top prizes included Fidalgo Climax, King of Show (Best A or AA) (Bill Aldridge); Formby Perfection, Queen of Show (Best B) (Marge Schmeer); Nenekazi, Prince of Show (Best BB) (Tom Cleere); Ryan K, Princess of Show (Best Min) (Roger Miller); Hy Mallow, Duke of Show (Arthur Haskins); and Alloway Candy, Duchess of Show (Roger Miller). The Best Arrangement was an impressive mass arrangement by Annie Radcliff, master at turning exhibitors' seconds (blooms not worth entering) into works of beauty.

For anyone with time to walk around Planting Fields, the dahlia display garden had an amazing selection of dahlia cultivars, by far the most I have seen in any public dahlia garden. Some members came to the

**By Alan A. Fisher**  
**ADS Membership Chairman**

The quality of this trial garden is a tribute to Bill Allgeier, Head of the Eastern Trial Garden for the past 10 years, because the trial garden was floundering before he took it over. Numerous members of the Mid Island Dahlia Society meet every Sunday during the growing season to groom the plants, and judges in the area visit and score the seedlings regularly.

### Banquet and Annual Meeting

Perhaps keeping with recent traditions, the Mid Island Dahlia Society had prominent politicians involved in the Show Banquet. The main speaker at the awards banquet was President Theodore Roosevelt, whose family home is very close to Planting Fields. President Roosevelt, who celebrated the 100th anniversary of becoming President the day before the show, put together selections from some of his old speeches to give a stirring call to arms to fight terrorism. His words from 100 years ago were very apt given the events of the previous days.

Bernadette Castro, Commissioner of Parks for New York, represented Governor George Pataki and presented a number of awards. The most significant for dahlia people are the ADS Gold Medal winners. Dr. Michael Pryor of the Connecticut Dahlia Society, past President of the North Atlantic Dahlia Conference, has long been one of the top exhibitors in the Northeast. Dr. Pryor is a chemist whose research experiments generated techniques that produce top quality blooms annually. Interestingly, no one in ADS uses as much fertilizer as Dr. Pryor.

The other Gold Medal winner is Bill Allgeier, Director of the Eastern Trial Garden, Co-Chairman of the National Show, and for 30 years a leader of the Mid Island Dahlia Society. Mrs. Castro also presented framed wood sculptures of New York State to some of the leaders of dahlias in New York, including one for Harry Rissetto, outgoing ADS

had lost friends or relatives in the terrorist attacks, and everyone was jumpy.

The Mid Island Dahlia Society did an outstanding job of presenting a beautiful dahlia show with an appropriate mood. Large American flags draped the exhibition and banquet halls. A moment of silence, singing of God Bless America, and appreciation for veterans of various wars reminded us of how much we owe to our country and its defenders. Collection boxes and bloom sales at the show raised more than \$3000 in donations to the disaster relief fund. More than 5000 visitors came to Planting Fields in Oyster Bay, Long Island over the weekend to view the show and many of the visitors thanked the organizers for providing a bit of beauty in the midst of the ugliness of the tragic week.

display garden when Wayne Holland followed his informative slide program and lecture on how to pollinate dahlias by hand with a demonstration on actual blooms. Others walked around and looked at hundreds of cultivars in the exceptionally well maintained garden.

The dahlia that impressed me the most was the best bloom of Just Peachy I have ever seen, growing on a very healthy plant. I did not have the pleasure of visiting the Eastern Trial Garden, which is several miles from Planting Fields and the show site. However, Norm Hines, Editor of the ADS Bulletin, who has visited nearly every ADS Trial Garden, said that the New York Trial Garden was easily the most impressive and best maintained he has ever seen. Those of us who have seen numerous slides from entries in this trial garden in the annual New Introductions program in the ADS Slide Library had reason to expect the Eastern Trial Garden to be in excellent condition.

President.

While Commissioner Castro presented most of the awards, perhaps the nicest was the one she did not present. Steve Nowotarski, Co-Chairman of the National Show, presented Mrs. Castro with the ADS Achievement Award winning entry: a pink miniature formal decorative that he named in her honor. Mrs. Castro was very moved at the honor, and she was far from the only person in the banquet hall with misty eyes.

Perhaps the most important event at the Annual Meeting was the formal adoption of a new classification sections for Stellar dahlias, and the separation of novelty into double and disk (open centered) novelties. These new sections will be in the Classification Handbook starting in 2002.

Those of us able to travel to the show saw a new side of the dahlia at the 2001 ADS National Show dahlias to help bring people together during a time of crisis. The setting and the appropriate atmosphere under the Mid Island Dahlia Society combined to make for an exceptionally moving and memorable event. I have never before been as proud to be a part of ADS.