



Southeastern
Michigan Dahlia
Society

February 21, 2026

Agenda

- Dahlias in Antarctica – Lucy Propst
- Dahlias in Grow Bags – Russell Propst
- Mark your Calendars – Lucy Propst

Break

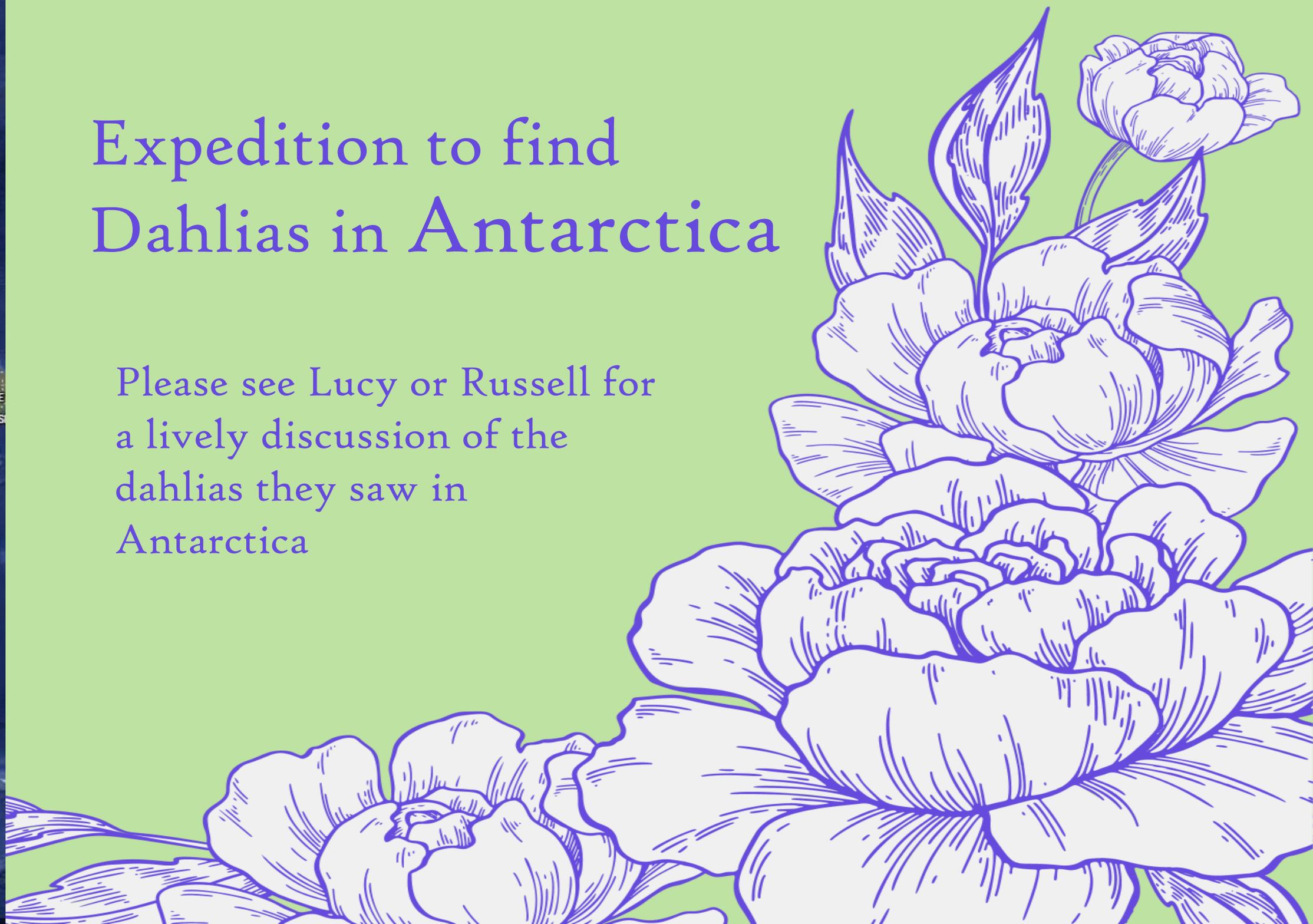
- Pests & Fertilizer – Lucy Propst
- SEMDS History Fun Facts – Elyse Swenson
- For the Love of Vases – Renee Lower





Expedition to find Dahlias in Antarctica

Please see Lucy or Russell for
a lively discussion of the
dahlias they saw in
Antarctica



Dahlias in Grow Bags

Russell Propst

Group discussion of experiences
using Grow Bags





Propst Grow Bag dahlia garden



Mark your Calendars

Tuber & Plant Sale – key dates

Late March – potting up
Sunday, April 26 – Sale workday
Friday, May 1 – Sale setup
Saturday, May 2 – Sale

SEMDS Annual Dahlia Tuber & Plant Sale

Late March – Date TBD

Members will be invited to help **pot up tubers** for the upcoming plant sale.

Sunday, April 26 – Sale workday

Members are asked to **donate extra tubers** for the sale. Please bring donations to the workday at Telly's. All members are invited to help **bag, label, inventory, and organize** tubers for the sale.

Friday, May 1 – Sale setup

Members are needed to **help set up** for the sale.

Saturday, May 2 – Sale 🎉

Members are needed to **assist shoppers** (plus many other tasks) during the sale.

Telly's Greenhouse

May 02, 2026

Sale starts @ 8:00 am



Tubers \$5
Plants \$10



Detailed instructions will be in the April Newsletter!



Tubers Wanted!

If you are planning to donate tubers, please ensure:

- Tubers are firm and show visible eyes/sprouts.
- The cultivar name is known - no mystery tubers.

We greatly appreciate your generous donations and support of the sale!

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Watering and fertilizing

Watering:

- Young dahlia plants do not need a lot of water; in fact, excessive water can lead to rotting of the plant.
- For larger plants, a good rule of thumb is to water if the rainfall is less than one inch in seven days.
- Pots require more regular watering.

Fertilizing:

- The best strategy for fertilizing is to **begin with a soil test** to determine pH and the specific soil needs.
- Lacking that information, the plants will generally benefit from regular treatments with a water soluble or granular fertilizer. “Weakly, weekly.”
- Traditional wisdom:
 - **high nitrogen fertilizer through the middle of the season**
 - **minimize nitrogen at the end of the season**





Pest Management

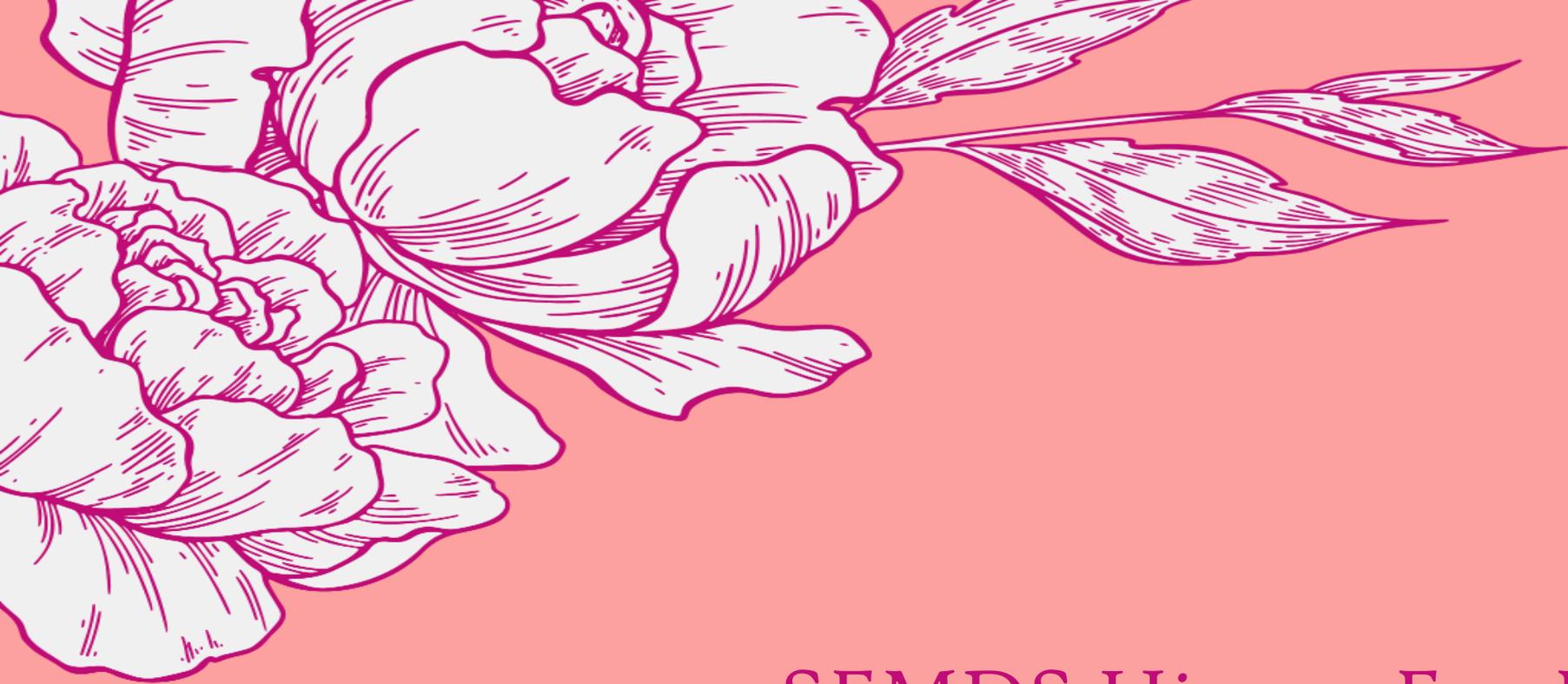
Protecting your plants from pests

- Small dahlia plants are susceptible to **slug** damage.
 - manually remove slugs early each morning or
 - commercial slug killer.
- **Japanese beetles**
 - manually remove the beetles into a bucket of soapy water.
- **Other insects**
 - insecticidal soap or a
 - commercial pesticide. **Follow label directions carefully.**

Organic Approach

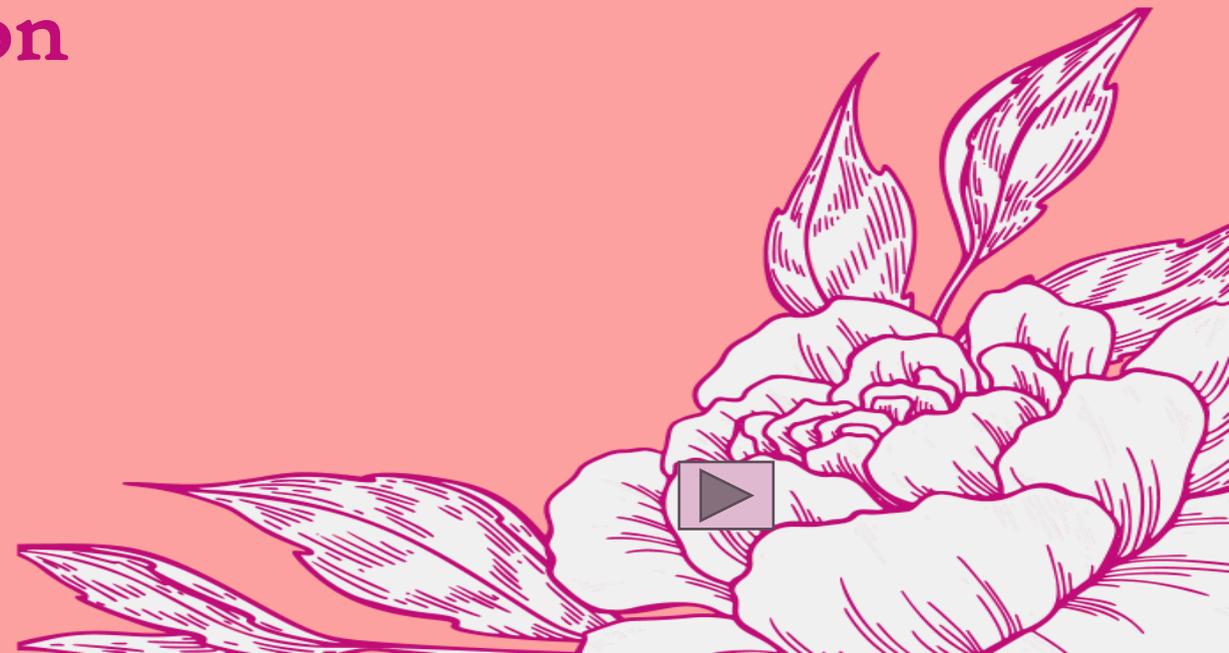
Dahlias take well to an organic approach to gardening.

- They do well in soil with lots of organic content even in the absence of chemical fertilizers.
 - Pest control is not essential and can be reasonably well accomplished without resorting to chemical pesticides.
- 



SEMDS History Fun Facts

Elyse Swenson



SEMDS

History in Review



Promoting & Supporting the Growing, Showing,
and Enjoyment of Dahlias in our community

SEMEDS Hybridizers



KELTON ZBARCHA



SEMEDS Hybridizers



KELTON ZBARCHA 4002 M FD Y YL2



COMING SOON
NEW CULTIVAR



Kelton's Dahlia Journey From Indifferent to Hybridizer

How It Began

- Discovered dahlias in 2015
- Quickly shifted from indifferent to inspired
- Began growing at home in Southeastern Michigan in 2016

Mentorship & Growth

- Influenced by Michael Genovese
- Mentored by Don Reinhard

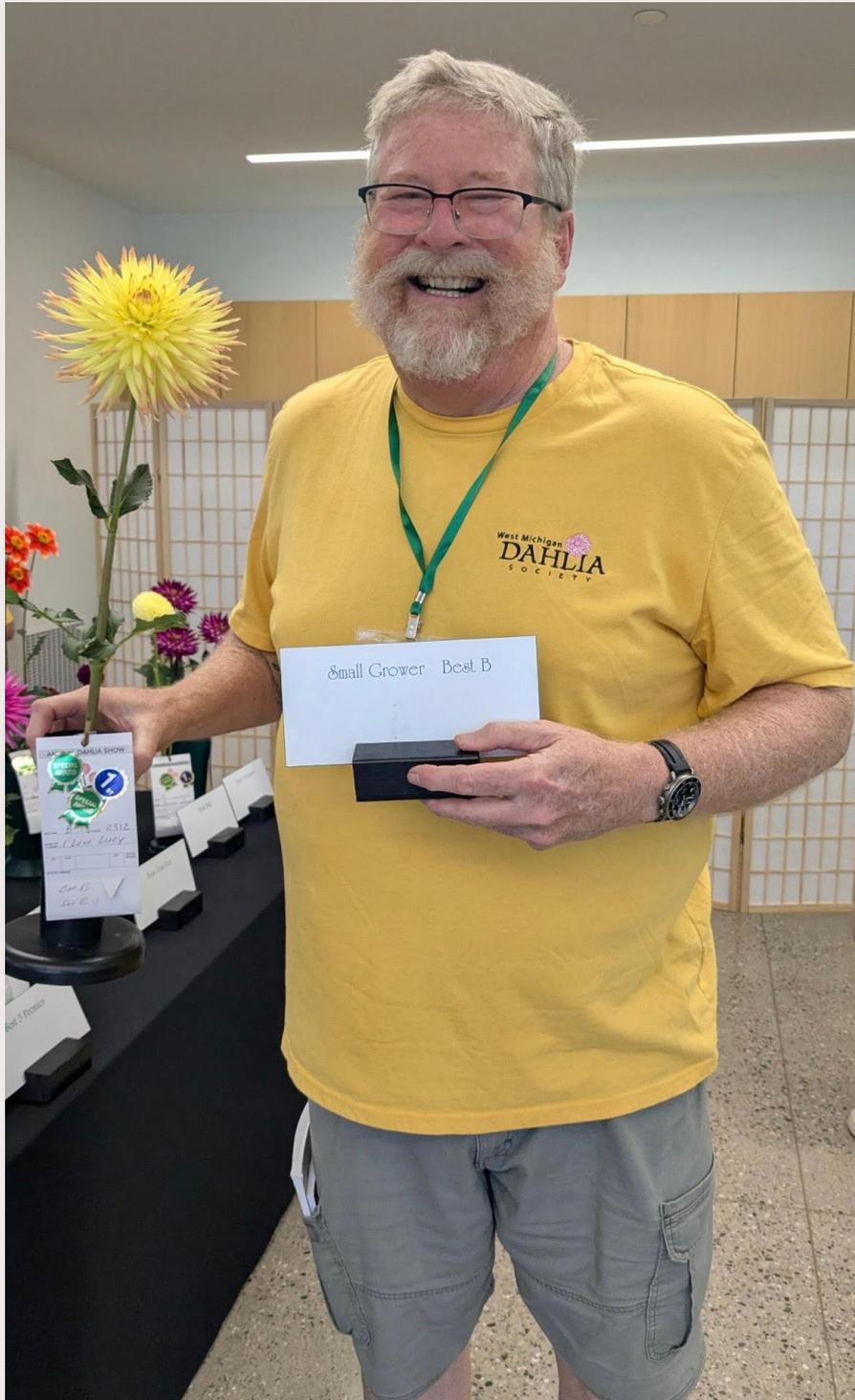
Growing in the Midwest

- Navigates frost and fall weather challenges
- Uses afternoon shade to reduce plant stress
- Learned early the importance of proper tuber storage

Community

- Joined the Southeastern Michigan Dahlia Society in 2019
- Earned blue ribbons as a novice grower
- Values shared learning and growing together





Russell's Dahlia Journey

Russell began growing dahlias about 20 years ago and quickly fell in love with their beauty and the challenge of growing them well. He grows in his own yard, working with tough clay soil and drainage issues learning much of it the hard way. He joined SEMDS with his wife, Lucy, and says community has meant *everything* in his journey. Over the years, he's received both local and national recognition, including ADS recognition for "I Love Lucy."

What keeps him going? The challenge, the joy, and the stories. His advice to the next generation: If you have a passion, take action there's so much fun and joy waiting for you.



I love Lucy





Back in the 70's *SEMDS*

- A Note from the Past... on Rice Paper
- This original SEMDS letter was typed on **rice paper** a thin, lightweight paper often used for important correspondence before home printers and email.
- Rice paper was delicate, slightly translucent, and felt almost silky to the touch. It made copies easier to mail and gave letters a certain elegance.
- Who remembers typing on rice paper?
No “undo” button... just careful keystrokes and maybe a little white-out!
- A beautiful reminder of how our society communicated long before texts and emails — and how much love and effort went into every message.

SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN DAHLIA SOCIETY

ANNUAL POT LUCK SUPPER

AND

WHITE ELEPHANT SALE

SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 1979 - 6:30 P. M.

TEL-TWELVE SHOPPING MALL (COMMUNITY ROOM)
Telegraph and 12-Mile Rds., Southfield

The Pot Luck Committee, headed by Marge Neubacher, will appreciate your returning the enclosed addressed and stamped postcard, indicating what you will bring. Pot luck dishes should be large enough to serve eight and the committee requests that cakes, etc., be cut in serving pieces before bringing. The charge this year to offset the cost of the meat will be \$1.00 per person. If you do not bring a dish to add to the pot luck, the cost will be \$3.00 per person.

There will be a short membership meeting following the Pot Luck Supper.

WHITE ELEPHANT SALE: Bring your surplus houseplants, pots, umbrellas, household articles, garden books, garden supplies, jewelry, etc. - "one man's discards are another's treasure"! The committee will pre-price these articles before the sale. You may find just what you need and help the society at the same time!

NEWS OF MEMBERS: We are very sorry to report the loss of another member, Mr. Fred Passwater, who passed away suddenly in November. We extend our sympathy to his wife and family.

MIDWEST CONFERENCE and SHOW: Southeastern Michigan Dahlia Society is affiliated with this conference of dahlia societies. Several of our members regularly attend, and often exhibit at the Midwest show. It will be hosted this year by the Southtown Dahlia Club of Chicago, and held in Ford City Mall, Chicago, Illinois, August 30 through September 2. Headquarters will be the Holiday Inn adjacent to the mall. Further details will be available later in the year, if you would like to plan to attend this event.

We look forward to seeing you at the Pot Luck on Saturday, March 17!

John Emerson, President
15122 Rosemont,
Detroit, Michigan 48223
272-3157

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR 1979 DUES?

SMDS dues are \$5.00. American Dahlia Society dues are \$6.00 (if paid through our Society), which includes the quarterly A.D.S. Bulletin. Please make check payable to Southeastern Michigan Dahlia Society and mail to Mrs. Dolores Emerson, Recording Secretary, 15122 Rosemont, Detroit, Michigan 48223.

A Little SEMDS History 1979

In March of 1979, the Southeastern Michigan Dahlia Society gathered at the Tel-Twelve Mall for their Annual Pot Luck Supper and White Elephant Sale.

Members were encouraged to bring surplus houseplants, pots, umbrellas, garden books, jewelry, and "one man's discards are another's treasure!" The committee even pre-priced everything before the sale organized then, organized now!

Nearly 50 years later, we're still carrying on the tradition just with a dahlia twist.

This year, instead of general treasures, we're exchanging vases for our White Elephant fun.



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A Little SEMDS History
1979

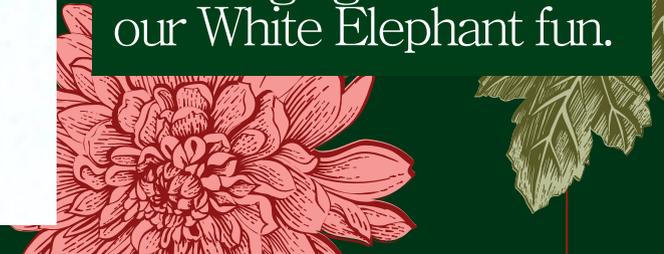
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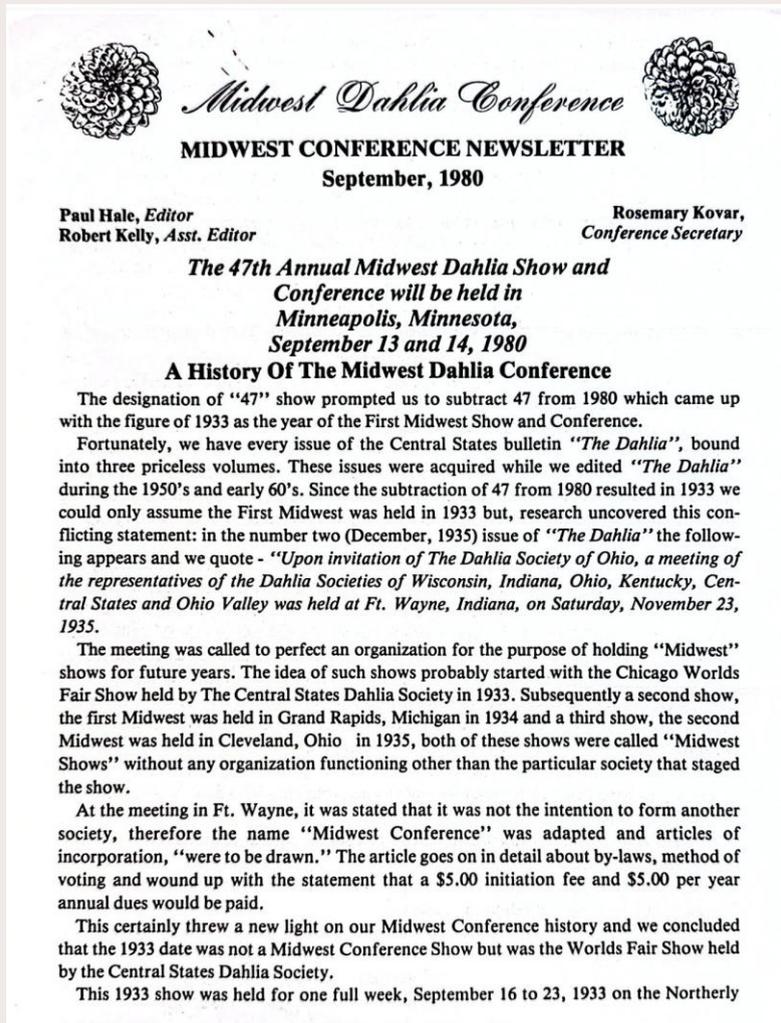
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Midwest Dahlia Conference



- From the Midwest Dahlia Conference – 1980
- This 1980 newsletter from the Midwest Dahlia Conference shares the history of the very first Midwest shows, which began in the 1930s. Growers gathered to exhibit incredible blooms, including record-breaking dahlias over 17 inches wide!
- It's a beautiful reminder that for nearly a century, dahlia lovers have come together to grow, show, learn and build lasting friendships around these extraordinary flowers.

Island Worlds Fair Grounds, Chicago, Illinois. Dues to the Central States Dahlia Society were \$1.00 per year. The final statement of the announcement of this great show was the invitation to see "One Hundred Thousand Dahlias in hundreds of time tested varieties grown under the grueling test of our Worlds Fair Trial grounds in the heat of Inland Central States climate."

We could dig into our back issues of "The Dahlia" and come up with some mighty interesting information such as a list of "best in show" and "largest in show" and location of show throughout the exciting 47 years of Midwest Conference Shows.

This isn't the time for this, we promise however, that future bulletins will contain these listings including the names of the growers of the winning blooms. Expect to read unbelievable statements like this: "Murphys Masterpiece" is the worlds largest dahlia!" Mr. Harold J. Gallimore of East Liverpool, Ohio went before Maude E. Gill, notary public, Columbia County, Ohio, on September 28, 1934 and there and then Miss Gill measured his bloom of "Murphys Masterpiece" and swore Mr. Gallimore to the measurement of 17¼ inches. In 1933 this same extraordinary dahlia grew to 17 inches for Mr. M.H. Davidson, commercial grower of dahlias, of Wytheville, Virginia. Murphys Masterpiece is a masterpiece indeed!"

An extremely interesting statement appears in the volume 5 issue of December 1936, *The Dahlia*, "The First National Show held outside of New York was staged at Detroit, Michigan in Convention Hall on September 18 and 19th, 1936." The Third Midwest Dahlia Show was held in Cincinnati, Ohio, September 26 and 27, 1936. This is interesting to say the least, compiling a Midwest Conference Bulletin is going to be an exciting experience for me.

This is the time to change from past to present tense and state that I, Paul Hale am grateful to have been selected as editor of a Midwest Conference Bulletin as voted during the mid winter, Midwest Conference meeting held in Elkhart, Indiana in May, 1980. Mr. Robert Kelly of the Minneapolis, Minnesota Society and president of this 1980 Show and Conference was selected to assist me. The two of us with the help of each conference members secretary can and will publish a top notch, information bulletin for the Midwest Conference Society members. We will stress up-to-date news from each society with names of both growers and varieties. We will strive toward a standard show schedule, and standard show tags. We will talk in down-to-earth language that will stimulate the experienced grower and interest the novice. The recruiting of novice growers will be uppermost in our program and complicated new scientific endeavors pertaining to dahlia virus and disease will be held to a minimum.

Welding the Midwest Conference into an ever stronger conference that it is today will be number one on our list.

Robert Kelly and I look forward to serving you with the best publication possible that is devoted to the growing and exhibiting of dahlias.

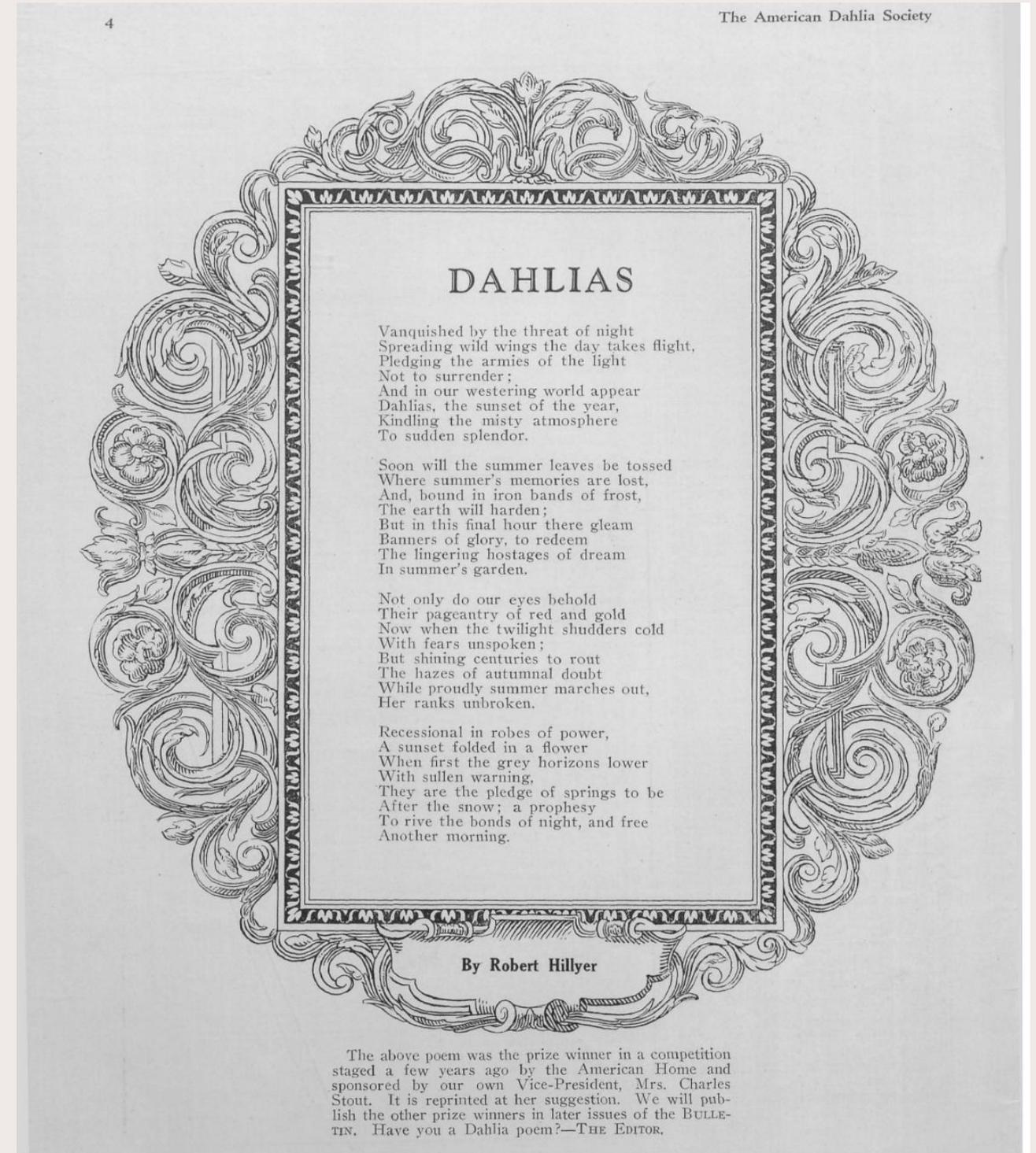
The friends we acquire as we pursue our favorite hobby and without a doubt the most rewarding of the game.

Respectfully,
Paul Hale



Issue of February 1934

- What This Poem Is Saying
- The poem describes dahlias as the brave, beautiful flowers of late summer and early fall.
- As the days grow shorter and frost begins to threaten, dahlias shine their brightest bold, colorful, and full of life. They feel like summer's last gift before winter arrives.
- Even as the season fades, dahlias remind us that beauty and hope are still present and that spring will come again.



Issue of February 1934

- What This Poem Is Saying
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DAHLIAS

Vanquished by the threat of night
Spreading wild wings the day takes flight,
Pledging the armies of the light
Not to surrender;
And in our westering world appear
Dahlias, the sunset of the year,
Kindling the misty atmosphere
To sudden splendor.

Soon will the summer leaves be tossed
Where summer's memories are lost,
And, bound in iron bands of frost,
The earth will harden;
But in this final hour there gleam
Banners of glory, to redeem
The lingering hostages of dream
In summer's garden.

Not only do our eyes behold
Their pageantry of red and gold
Now when the twilight shudders cold
With fears unspoken;
But shining centuries to rout
The hazes of autumnal doubt
While proudly summer marches out,
Her ranks unbroken.

Recessional in robes of power,
A sunset folded in a flower
When first the grey horizons lower
With sullen warning,
They are the pledge of springs to be
After the snow; a prophesy
To rive the bonds of night, and free
Another morning.



1980 NEWS

Volume 1 December 1980 \$1.25

“Imagine, 50 years of
growing in the
Midwest weather!
We are hearty souls
indeed! 1981 is going
to be great.”

So will 2026

Thank
you





For the Love of Vases
Renee Lower





-Number one will choose their favorite piece to start.

-Number two can either love their own choice or “steal” the vase already chosen.

-Etc.

If a vase is stolen, the original chooser gets to select another favorite.

Plot twist: The member whose vase is “loved” (stolen) the most will win a prize!





Lucy's
vase stash