



President's Message

It feels like it has been quite some time since I wrote to you. And it has! It seems like every time we are set to launch a somewhat delayed newsletter, something happens. But, seriously, this has been the strangest year in my memory, with some world-shaking changes for all of us, and some personal shake-ups for myself.

What with COVID-19 happening (that seems like an understatement) in late winter/almost spring, and continuing into the hopefully-not-too-distant future, I think that all groups, including AHA and the affiliate groups, have had to make a big shift. This has meant that shows and events have been cancelled, things have shifted online (in some cases) and we've all had to rethink what we are doing and why we are doing it. It is mind-bending. I hope that your group has been able to find a way to accomplish your purpose, or at least use the time to plan for the future.

Normally, we would be required to have an annual general meeting prior to the end of June, however, this requirement has been waived for 2020 due to COVID-19, so we decided to not just hold a tele-conference call (as we had originally planned) just for the sake of holding it. We'll make sure that the paperwork is in order, and we'll have something spectacular next year.

The executive has been quietly working in the background, carrying out our various tasks and initiatives. We continue to increase the value and accessibility of information on the AHA website. You might have noticed more and more events being listed in the calendar, at least while there were some. This past year, we posted several dozen events. Once things get rolling again, please feel free to share your group events, so that others might get ideas (or better yet, they might attend). AHA aims to encourage as much idea sharing between people as we can. We continue to work on making it easier for gardeners to find affiliate societies. We feel that all of this will go towards the overall purpose of the AHA, which is to raise the profile of horticulture in Alberta.

Until the next time, on behalf of the entire AHA Executive, I wish you all the best. – Robert Spencer

Dahlia Virus(es): What you need to know if you love dahlias!

Excerpts from an article by Clara Qualizza, Lobstick Garden Club, Evansburg, Alberta

My first "in person" experience with dahlias was at the University of Alberta Devon Botanic Garden. There was a display bed overflowing with these four foot high dazzlers in the most astonishing colours and forms I had ever seen. I started my growing adventures with about 10 varieties ordered from Ferncliff Gardens in B.C. the very next year. I joined the Alberta Dahlia and Gladiolus Society (ADGS), hoping that I would find fellow dahlia aficionados with whom I could delve into all the details of dahlia cultivation, and indeed I did. It is through the generously shared, accumulated wisdom of these devoted and enthusiastic growers that I learned how to properly store my tubers, how to fertilize, prune and show these divas. It was here, also, that I learned about the dahlia virus(es).

The ADGS is a member of the American Dahlia Society (ADS), and as a result we get to hear first-hand about the fascinating dahlia research that is stewarded by the ADS, one of the programs being focused specifically on dahlia virus. The research underway at Washington State University under the direction of Dr. Hanu Pappu.

What is Dahlia Virus? Like us, animals, and other plants, dahlias can become infected with viruses. The viruses that affect plants are different than those that affect us, but in both cases the viruses weaken and can sometimes kill their "host". The dahlia "virus" is not actually a single virus, dahlias can be hit by one or a consortium of several viruses that also affect other plants. The common viruses of dahlias are Cucumber Mosaic Virus, Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus, Tomato spotted Wilt virus, Tobacco Streak Virus, Dahlia Mosaic Virus and Dahlia Common Mosaic Virus.

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What does an infected plant look like? Because there are a variety of different viruses that affect dahlias, the symptoms of a virus infection vary. They include yellow blotches and spots on leaves, yellowing of the veins of the leaf, yellowing or rotting of leaf edges (margins). Infected plants may be stunted, and their leaves deformed. Once a plant is infected it is infected and carries and can transmit the virus until it dies. The ADS has some of the best photos of infected plants, to help you identify if your plants are affected.



**Chlorotic yellow spots,
yellow blotching (mosaic)**

Photos- Clara Qualizza

Why should you care? Insects in the garden, especially aphids and thrips, can transmit the virus from the diseased plants to all of your healthy ones, and to other crops in your garden! If you are like me and have invested in some very special varieties or have built up your stock of dahlia tubers over the years, then you don't want to risk infecting them and compromising your investment and future enjoyment of them by ignoring plants that show symptoms. Every year the problem will get bigger, especially if you over-winter your tubers, or if the disease has transmitted to any of your perennials or other plants that you might over-winter

One virused plant represents a serious threat to my entire collection, so I am as vigilant as a hungry hawk, and although it pains me, I am brutal about following the "if in doubt throw it out" principle.

How is it transmitted?

Dahlia viruses are spread in three ways

1. Insect and other vectors
2. Virus infected or contaminated seed, tubers and plants
3. Humans! who can spread it just by touching infected plant materials, particularly during intentional "wounding" such as during pruning, disbudding, flower harvesting, and tuber division

Good News and Advice

- Keep your plants strong and healthy and you will increase their resistance to viral infection
- Clean your tools with soap and water or with a 10% bleach solution between uses.
- Control of insect vectors can be difficult, your best bet is to eliminate virus sources (diseased plants, tubers). Follow the "if in doubt throw it out" principle.

Ongoing research. Some cultivars of dahlias appear to be more resistant to viruses than others and Dr. Pappu and his team are investigating which ones and why. Research is also underway to propagate virus free dahlia stock through meristem culture, so in the future suppliers of tubers can fully guarantee virus-free stock.

Clara lives near Wildwood, AB. Follow her at Meadow and Thicket Farm Flowers and on the Sustainable Flowers Podcast. Read her whole article on the AHA website:

<http://abhorts.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Dahlia-Virus-website-article-v2.pdf>

Super Deal!!! – Special Opportunity

Here is a great deal being offered to AHA affiliates from renowned horticulturist and author, Sara Williams.

“As you may know, our publisher, Coteau Books, filed for bankruptcy a few months ago. They had been going for 45 years, were wonderful to work with, and it was quite a shock. Hugh Skinner put in an offer to the liquidators for the remaining books on behalf of himself, Bob Bors (co-author of Growing Fruit in Northern Gardens) and myself (including the revised Creating the Prairie Xeriscape). The result was that we were able to buy the “remainders” at a substantial discount. Bob and Hugh both drove to Regina to pick up the books and the three of us now have them.

*Hugh and I would like to “pass on the savings” (sounds like a commercial, but true enough) to non-profit groups and organizations such as community garden associations, Master Gardener groups, and horticultural societies. We were wondering if the AHA and its affiliated societies would be interested? We would be able to sell **Gardening Naturally** for \$5.00 per copy (cover price is \$25) if purchased by the case. There are 40 books in a case. Individual societies, could, of course, divide up a case according to their members’ interest. Alternatively, the AHA could resell them at a slightly higher price as a fundraiser.*

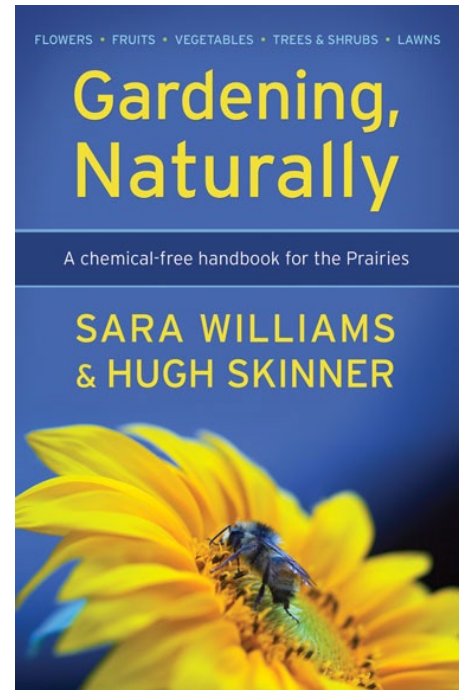
Would that be something you would be interested in considering? The books are sitting in my closet at the moment, but when you are next able to have an in-person board meeting, we could make arrangements for delivery of as many cases as required if there is interest.”

If you are interested in taking up Sara on this generous offer, please feel free to contact her at your earliest convenience.

“If an individual society within the AHA would like to purchase a case of 40 books at \$5.00 per book (\$200.00), please ask them to email me. They would be free to resell them at \$5.00 or use it as a fundraiser at the suggested resale price of \$10.00 resale.

Getting the cases of books to them will involve some ingenuity as bus service is no longer available and shipping expensive. Our best bet would be to find someone traveling from Saskatoon to Alberta who is willing to take them!”

Sara Williams – sew130@mail.usask.ca



2020 International Year of Plant Health

Plants are the foundation of life on earth. They produce the oxygen we breathe. They provide more than 80% of the food we eat. We use them to make clothes, shelter, medicines, and many other things that are essential to our lives. For nearly half of the earth’s population, plants are a primary source of income.

The IYPH 2020 emphasizes prevention and protection. **Everyone has a role to play.** For example, travellers must be careful when taking plants and plant products with them.

For more information on the IYPH and suggestions for local actions visit www.ippc.int.



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AHA Programs

Promote your Horticultural Society

In a normal year... Did you know you can post your events on the AHA website? Click on the "Contact Us" link, include the details you'd like publicized (date, time, location, event description, cost, contact details for more information) and send it off. You can even attach a photo, an event poster, or other relevant information. We'll post it to www.ABHortA.ca asap.

This year... (and in normal years) Why not share notes or ideas on what you are doing as a club/society/group. Getting ideas and learning from other people and groups is always useful.

Education Program

Have you used the AHA's Education Program? Funding is still available towards speaker costs, even virtual speakers. Consider partnering or involving other clubs in your area when bringing in a speaker and do joint advertising. Access the forms on the AHA website and speak to your AHA District Rep.

Judging Program

Due to COVID-19, the majority of bench shows have already been cancelled. In consideration of the safety of our AHA Judges, the AHA is not providing trained judges for any events this year, if any were still being offered. We'll be back at it in 2021.

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