

A Historic Look at our Club

The Tacoma Dahlia Society formed in 1912 after a successful show in 1911. Every year the show grew in size until 1917 when the war took priority. The club displayed dahlias in baskets and large bouquets in 1918 in the large downtown department stores. In 1926 the club was reformed and renamed the Washington Dahlia Society. Shows were held in the beautiful Crystal Ballroom of the Winthrop Hotel.

We had our final name change in 1934 and became the Washington State Dahlia Society. Although still really a Tacoma club we set out to start other clubs in the state. Over the years new clubs have come and gone but several remain in the Federation that were started by WSDS members.

A real driving force in our club was Mrs. J.W. Lee (Lillian) who devised a dahlia score card in 1934 and also started the first area trial garden in Puyallup at the Washington extension farm.

In the past 30+ years our driving force has been Les Connell who is our current President. A large commercial grower, Les has originated more than 500 varieties including Magic Moment, April Dawn and Amy K.

Ed Redd, originator of Elma Elizabeth, Klondike and Light Accord has been an active member since the 1970's.

When folks think of WSDS two things stand out as making us unique. Our support of the Pacific Northwest Trial Garden is a great source of pride for our club. Beyond helping others to get their originations into the dahlia mainstream, the trial garden also promotes dahlias and is one of the jewels in a large metropolitan park district.

Our other unique event is our yearly catered dinner at the Connell's Dahlia Farm. Several years ago we added our "Table Show" for the evening, which is a very popular event. All members and guests from all over western Washington are encouraged to bring their Monday blooms and compete. We have several invited judges who educate new exhibitors by explaining each of their choices. Prizes are generous and great fun to win.

This year our club will host our 95th consecutive show the last weekend in August. As with all that we do, our show is a labor of love to promote dahlias!