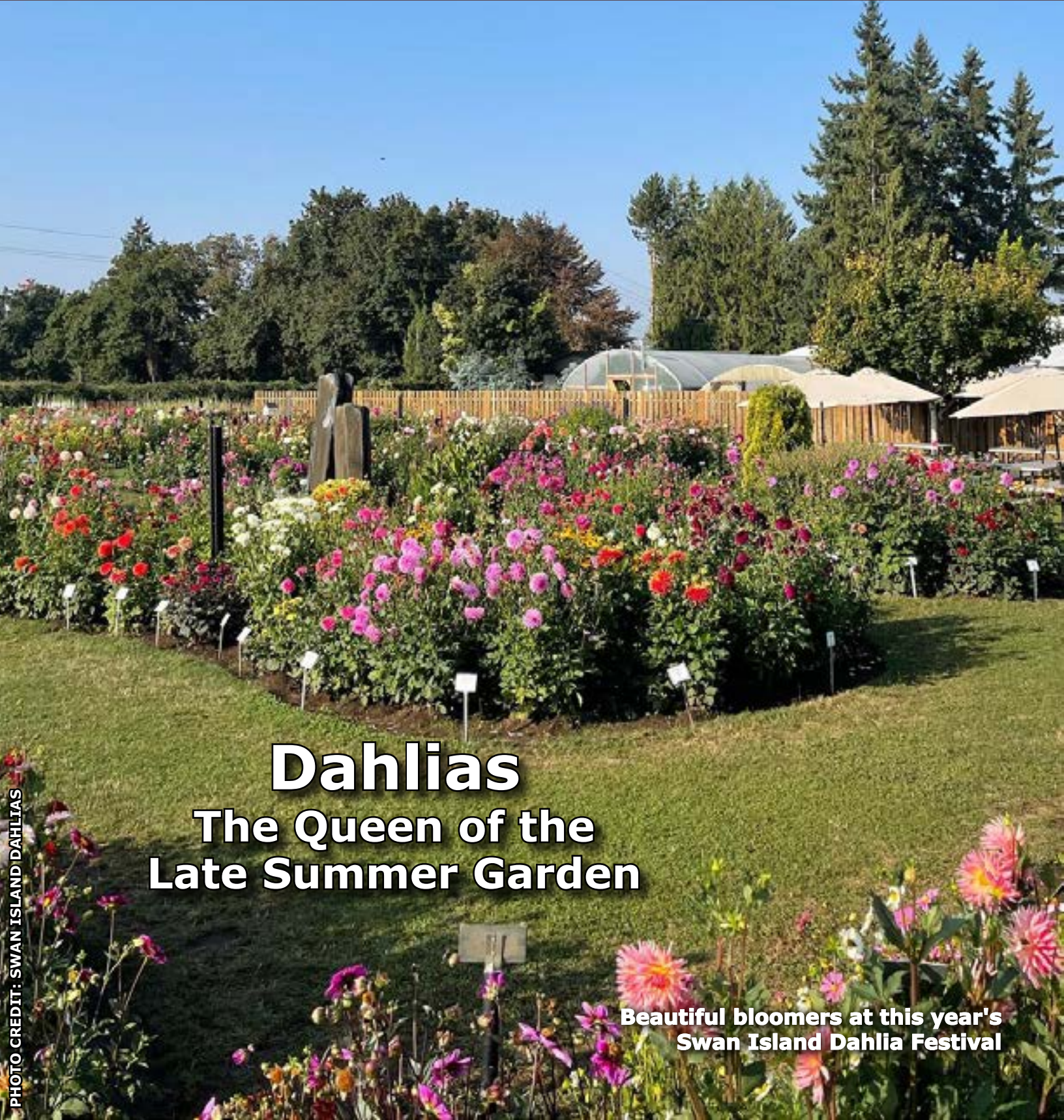




# Garden Time

## Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2023



## Dahlias

### The Queen of the Late Summer Garden

Beautiful bloomers at this year's  
Swan Island Dahlia Festival

PHOTO CREDIT: SWAN ISLAND DAHLIAS



**BUILT FOR THE ROAD  
AHEAD!**



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**Garden Time Newsletter • September 2023  
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**PODCAST**  
**027**

Season 2  
Episode 15

Aug. 24, 2023

*We all have heard about the birds and the bees. On this edition of the Garden Time podcast we tell you where new baby plants come from. We pay a visit to the garden of award winning hybridizer Kevin Vaughn and talk about how he has developed new iris, daffodils, hens and chicks, asters, and more.*



**Ryan, Judy and Jeff interview hybridizer Kevin Vaughn.**

If you have ever wanted to know where new plant varieties come from or how growers come up with new, cool-looking plants then this podcast is right up your alley. This month we visited the gardens of Kevin Vaughn. Though not a household name, some of the most popular plants in the industry have come from his trial gardens and his impressive hybridizing skills. He has developed new plants in these various families: hosta, iris, daffodil, helenium, cyclamen, aster, kniphofia, pulmonaria, sempervivum, gladiolus and daylilies, to name just a few.

The process of hybridization is not always an easy one. It starts when you select a

plant species and then choose the favorable plant traits that you want to have in a new plant from that species. You may want a cool leaf variegation or a new color in the bloom. It all starts with the parent plants. Then you have to be on top of the blooms before they open to isolate the pollen before the bees get to it and bring in foreign pollen from other plants. Then you bring pollen from the selected plants that you want to cross and rub them together. Sometimes this will require the use of a forceps to make sure the contact is complete and cross pollination occurs. Once this is done you then have to isolate that bloom until seeds form

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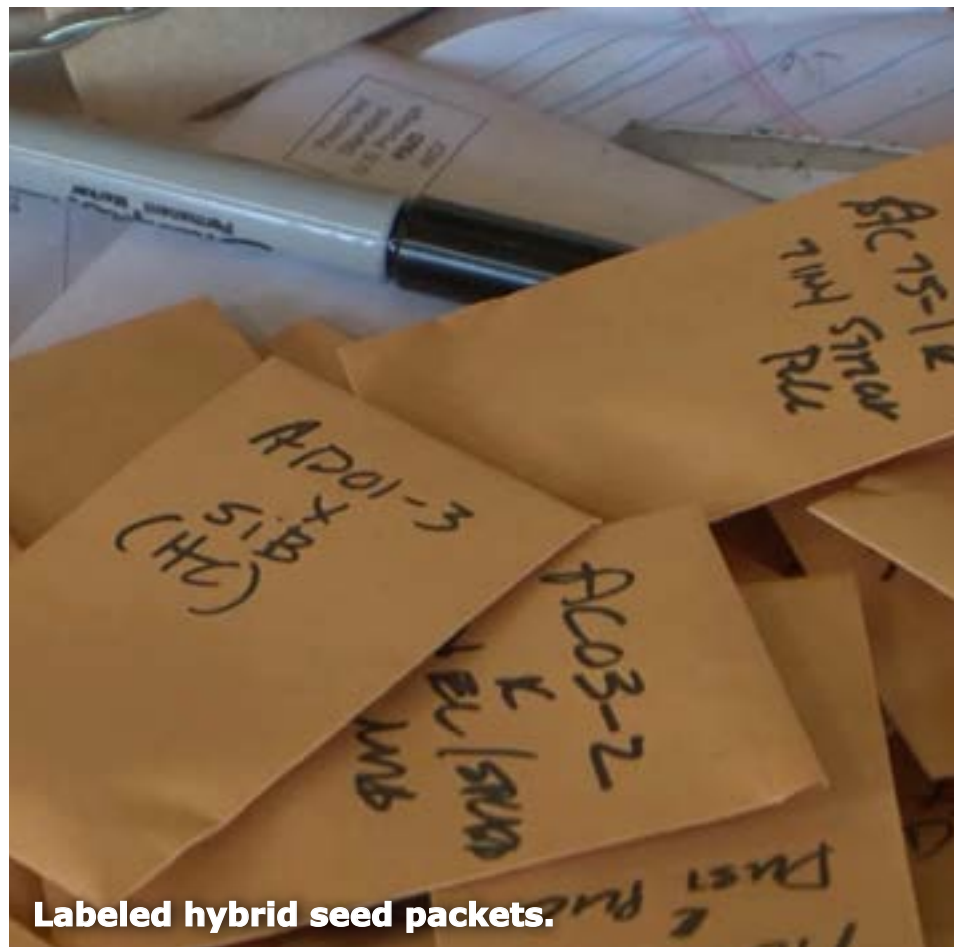
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Kevin Vaughn shows Ryan some of his hybrids.



Labeled hybrid seed packets.

to keep all other foreign pollen from ruining the cross that you have made. Once those seeds are formed they have to be harvested, cataloged and saved until they can be planted the next year to grow new seedlings of the plant you hope to achieve. For some species, Kevin can be dealing with 5,000-7,000 new seedlings a year. Once they are planted and have sprouted, it could take years to see if they bloom. For some species, like daffodils, it could take up to seven years to see the results of his cross breeding and up to ten years before that plant makes it to market. This is a long process and many times, he doesn't get the specific plant characteristics that he wants. Then it is back to the drawing board to start over again.

This is not creating a GMO (genetically modified organism) in the sense of splicing DNA. It is modifying plants just as Mother Nature has done for eons. The hybridizer is like a modified version of the wild pollinator, just aiming for targeted results. It does require a knowledge of genes and how to mix dominant and recessive traits to try and get a new plant, but there is no lab involved. The outdoor garden flower bed is the only laboratory here.

Some of the things that Kevin looks for are unique colors and foliage variegation for familiar plant varieties. He is also looking to create other traits too. For example, the 'Chick Charms Gold Nugget', a sempervivum that turns a bright gold color in late fall through late spring came from his breeding work, and that led to his newer 'semps' that are 10-12 inches in diameter. This passion for breeding new plants start-

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ed with his work in hostas. When he was much younger he helped bring a bunch of new variegated and fragrant hostas to the market. In fact, he has introduced over 70 new types of hostas to the retail market. If you are a lover of hostas, you probably have one of his plants in your garden. Kevin joked that some of his older varieties have been on the market for so long that he still sees them on the shelves of the local garden centers.

This passion for making new plants started in Massachusetts when Kevin was 12 and that started a lifelong career path through college and Grad school (his PhD was on hostas and their genetics), to today. Now retired from a government job, Kevin devotes a large portion of his days to working with plants. Now you may ask yourself, how does a breeder of new plants get paid? It depends, but there are a couple of different ways that they can earn money for all the hard work they do. One way is to just sell the whole plant to a company or large propagator for a one-time payment. Another way is to have an agreement with a company that guarantees that you will receive a small portion of each sale of the new plant for a given period of time. Either way, it turns out to be a small payment for months or years of hard work.

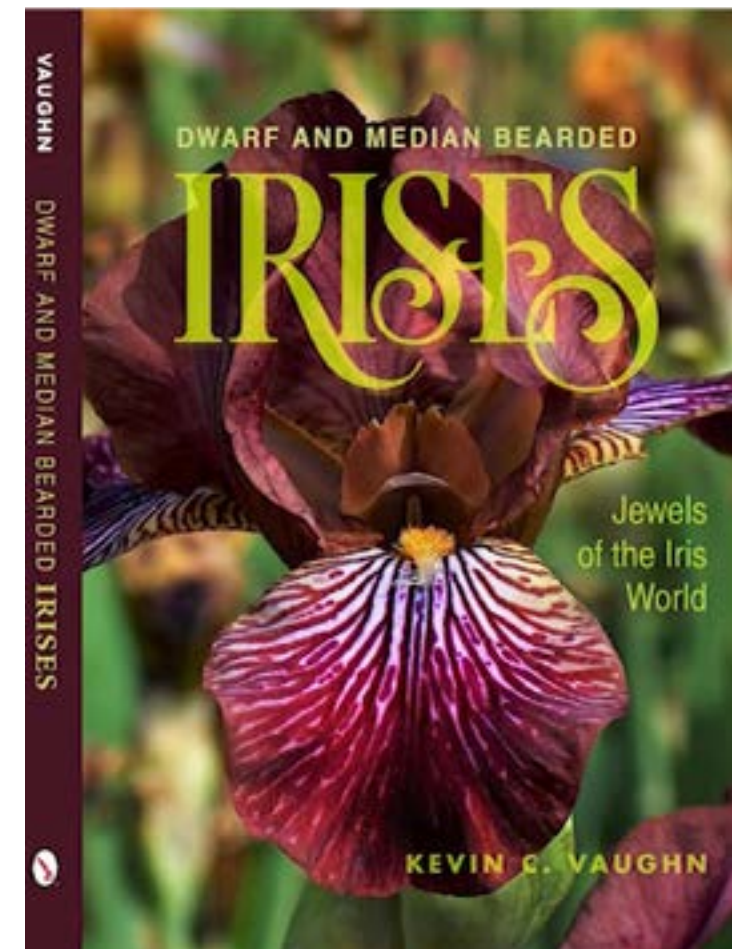
So what has Kevin been working on lately? Heat tolerance is one thing. With the hotter summers and drier conditions he has been looking at plants that can handle those temperatures. He is also working on kniphofias, the red hot poker plant. There are not a lot of color variations in these plants and he is looking for other



colors that are different than the traditional red. Additionally, he is working on plants that can be sold as garden plants and also serve the cut flower industry for florists. There is no end to the possibilities for this breeder.

Not only is Kevin an outstanding breeder of amazing plants, he is also an author. Kevin has written three books on some of the plants he loves. 'Beardless Irises, A Plant for Every Garden Situation', 'Dwarf and Median Irises, Jewels of the Iris World' and 'Sem-pervivum, A Gardener's Perspective of the Not-So-Humble Hens-and-Chicks' are all great reads with details of his experiences as a hybridizer. They are available through Amazon.

If all that wasn't enough, Kevin also plays clarinet and oboe for the Salem Orchestra (<https://www.salemorchestra.org/>). He is also part of the Salem Symphonic Winds (<https://salemorchestra.org/>) and the Festival Chorale Orchestra (<https://www.festivalchorale.org/>). Truly a man of many talents!



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**PODCAST  
028**

Season 2  
Episode 16

Aug. 31, 2023

The queen of the late summer garden has arrived. The dahlia is the star of the show this time of year and we pay a visit to the largest dahlia grower in the United States, Swan Island Dahlias. On this episode of the Garden Time Podcast, we'll learn about their annual dahlia festival and how you can grow your own award winning dahlias.



**Garden Time**

**Judy and Jeff with Heather Schloe of Swan Island Dahlias.**

The late summer garden is the stage for one of the most spectacular blooms of the year. The dahlia is a one-of-a-kind bloom that gardeners love to have in their garden. To learn more about this versatile flowering plant we stopped by the largest grower of dahlias in the United States, Swan Island Dahlias ([www.dahlias.com/800-410-6540](http://www.dahlias.com/800-410-6540)) in Canby, and talked with co-owner Heather Schloe.

First, the name, Swan Island Dahlias. Yes, there is a tie to Swan Island in Portland, Oregon. The original business was operated out of an office on Swan Island by

the McCarter family starting in 1927. They grew their dahlias originally in the Sellwood area of Portland and eventually moved to Canby. Heather's grandfather, Nick Gitts, was a dairy farmer who grew dahlias as a hobby and opened a small stand to sell dahlias along with running the dairy farm. In 1963 the McCarter's decided to sell the flower business and Nick Senior, now a lover of dahlias, purchased it. Now Heather and her father Nick Junior, run the business. The growing conditions in Canby are wonderful and it was easier in the early days to just keep the business name, though the loca-

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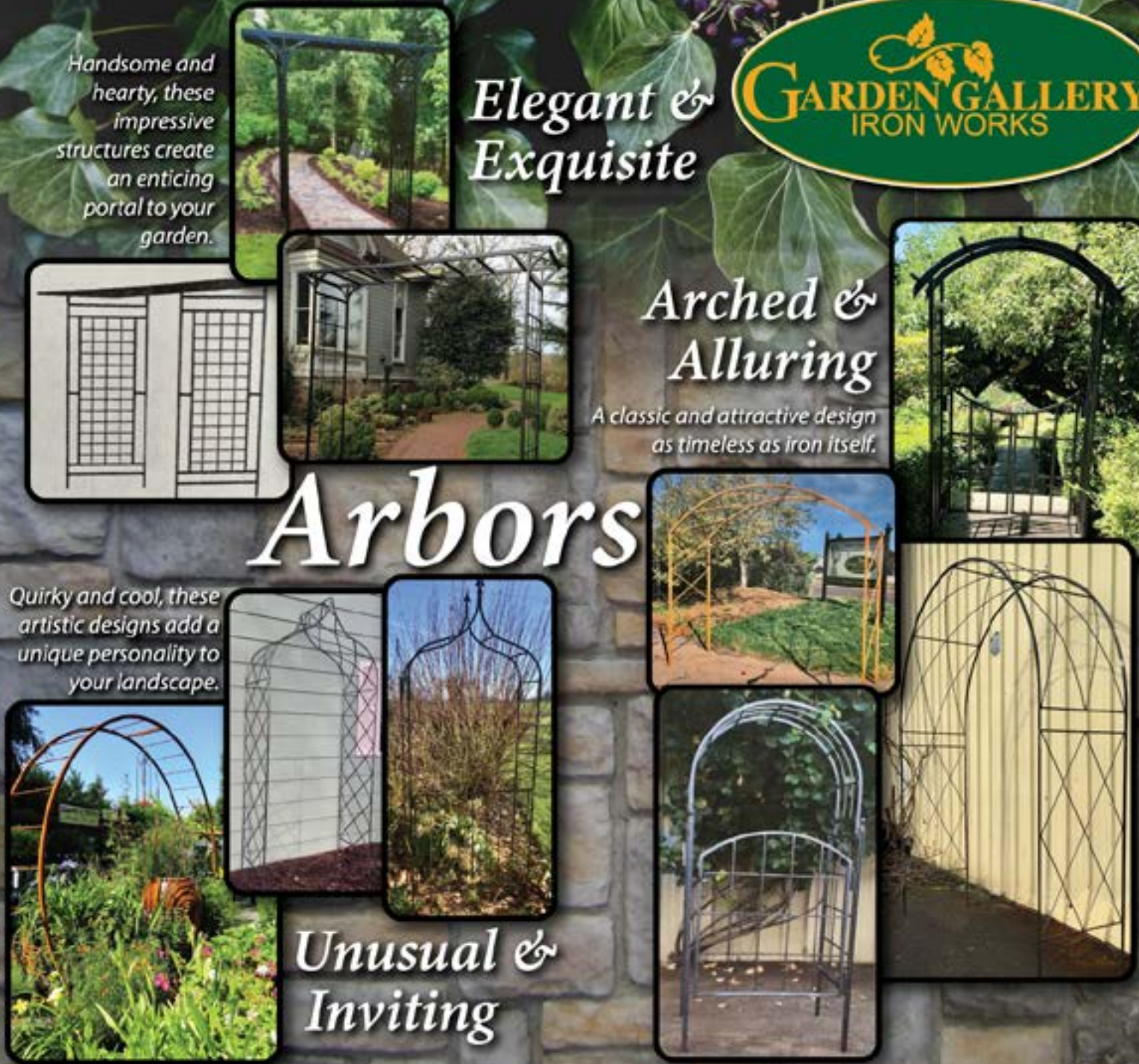
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**The Gitt Family in the early days of Swan Island Dahlias.**

tion had changed. The small growing area has expanded over the years to cover nearly 40 acres. On that, they produce over 375 varieties of dahlias that they sell at the farm and through their website.

In the early years, the annual festival was only a two weekend event. It featured a large cut flower display that had to be rebuilt every week with new flowers. However, COVID-19 forced a change in the festival. No longer could they have a crowded area of floral displays, but instead they could open the fields for more than just two weekends. Now the annual festival has expanded to two months! Starting at the beginning of August until the end of September, you can stop by five days a week (they are closed Mondays and Tuesdays) and enjoy many different events. Plus, there is still free admission and free parking. You can stroll through the fields and enjoy over 370 dahlia varieties. The benefit of being open for two months is that you don't have to deal with the big crowds anymore.

Some of the other benefits include more ac-

tivities on the farm. They now have a brand new expanded gift shop, daily food carts, live music on the weekends and the opportunity to purchase fresh cut dahlias to take home. There are also a lot of classes that cover various topics including dahlia care, art projects, designing floral displays, health and beauty topics, and much more. Check out their Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/swanislanddahlias/>) and website for details, since most of these classes require pre-registration.

After the break we returned to talk about how they also grow and breed new dahlia varieties. There are many styles of dahlia blooms, including pom pon, orchid, single, collarette, cactus, decorative, Waterlily, and lacinated. The Dahlia is one of the most versatile of blooms. They also hybridize new varieties and introduce them every year. Each year, they start with 10,000 seedlings and then, over the course of five years, they narrow it down to ten new introductions. Coming up with ten new names every year can be quite challenging. You can see some of these new varieties in their display garden



near the cut flower booth. This garden has huge walkways and combination plantings interspersed with an alphabetical planting of most of the varieties they grow at Swan Island Dahlias. The family names all the varieties that they produce. Some are named after family and friends, some names are humorous, some are topical, and some are named as a tribute, like the Garden Time dahlia, which was named for our show.

What if you want to grow and cut your own dahlias from your home garden? We even got tips on that! First we had some steps that the home gardener can be doing now to help their own dahlias. Heather recommended watching for spider mites. These tiny pests can start attacking your plant at the base and you may notice some yellowing of the leaves at the base of you plant. The other thing you can do is to give them a lot of water right now and to 'deadhead' or remove the old blooms, the watering and deadheading will promote more growth and even more blooms!

Heather then walked us through the steps





**Garden Time**

Heat-treating the dahlia stems to make the cut flowers last longer.

of building a great display. First she heat-treated the stems in 160-170 degree water, which will make the cut flowers last longer. You start by filling up a bucket with about four inches of the hot water. When you cut your flowers, you leave a nice long stem. Place the long stemmed flower in the water and let the water cool down with the flowers in the bucket. The longer stem helps keep the blooms from cooking in the steam from the water. The hot water prevents the flower from drying up. The plant's vascular system stays open so it can take up water a little longer. This means your flower's blooms will last longer. You can trim the flower stems to the length you want after the heat treatment. When starting your display, pick one variety of flower which establishes the size and height of the arrangement. Then fill in with the other styles and types of blooms around that first bloom. She even uses the discarded stems to add filler to the display. It is very easy to do!



A cut flower display.



**Garden Time**

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Of course, while you are at the festival you can order tubers for your garden. If you order them on-line during August and September you can get 10% off your order.

If you are looking for ideas or you want to fill your day with color, stop by the Dahlia Festival and check out the display or the fields of color.



**PODCAST  
029  
PREVIEW**

**Sept. 2023**

We're preparing for our next podcast, and here are some of the topics we plan to discuss. Since the Garden Time Podcast is a free-form format, we never know what might pop up as we talk, but the information below is a loose guide as to where we'll begin. We would love to have your input on topics for future podcasts. Send us your ideas and questions at [gardentime@comcast.net](mailto:gardentime@comcast.net).

In nature, everything is cyclical, and as we transition into fall, there is a new set of seasonal plants and chores for us to focus on.

For our September podcasts, we plan to discuss lawn care tips for the fall and winter. At this point, unless you have watered and fertilized regularly, your grass may be looking dry and brown, as the hot summer temperatures have forced those luscious green blades into dormancy. However, they will quickly recover once the fall rains begin and there are several things you can do to give your lawn an extra boost and make sure it thrives through the fall. We'll talk with some experts and share their advice.



**Autumn rains will make both lawns and weeds grow.**

PHOTO CREDIT: RON DUNEVANT

Also on the agenda are fall and winter perennials.

With the generally mild and wet fall and winters we experience here in the Pacific Northwest, autumn is one of the best times to plant, and we can choose from a large selection of gorgeous perennials to add to our yards. We'll introduce you to some that are catching our attention, discuss how, when and where to plant them, and share tips for how to keep them healthy through the winter. Keep a notepad handy as you're sure to want to add some of these beauties to your landscape.

Join us in September as we bring you two brand new Garden Time podcasts!



**Salvia, a great fall perennial.**

PHOTO CREDIT: TSUGAWA NURSERY

# Fall into a new Season



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# What To Do in the Garden

## SEPTEMBER



The time goes so fast! With Summer winding down, it's time to enjoy the last warm days of the year, and turn our focus to Fall. September is a good month to plant, and it's a great time to start planning your garden for next year. With Fall rains coming, new plants will get established before the cold weather arrives.

### PLANNING

- Plan some new color for spring by figuring out where to plant some spring bulbs. Creating pots with 'layers' of bulbs would be fun. A cluster of bright yellow daffodils planted at the base of a tree or three will really liven the yard up in the early months. Daffodils aren't eaten by squirrels or deer so they should remain intact for years giving you more color every spring.



- Check on the vegetables to be harvested. This is an important time to check on the crops, picking them before the veggies lose their flavor.
- Since September is a good month to plant and there are usually sales now on nursery stock, why not do a little landscape renovation? If you need help, bring some photos and notes into your local independent garden center. They can help you put together some good ideas of what to plant and where.

### PLANTING

- It's time for shopping and planting spring bulbs! As the weather cools, that should be your signal to purchase some bulbs for a spring display of sunny color. Tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and crocus can be found now. You'll have up until late October to plant them, but selection of the coolest

bulbs is gone early so don't delay.

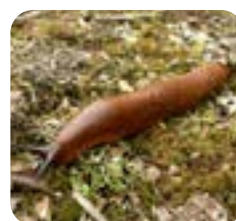
- Fall is an exceptional time to plant landscape trees and shrubs! With the rains coming on soon and the soil being so warm from the summer sun, the plant's root systems take right off this time of year. Most likely there are sales

to take advantage of, so the savings make it even more enticing.



### TASKS, MAINTENANCE & CLEAN-UP

- Apply Beneficial Nematodes to the beds below rhododendrons and azaleas to fight root weevil damage. Root weevil adults do the damage above ground that is visible so you'll know if they are around. The grubs below ground are the killers, girdling the trunk, besides eating the majority of the roots. Beneficial Nematodes are microscopic creatures that hunt out and destroy these pests and 229 more species of insects, but are not harmful at all to earthworms, humans or pets. They are active for two years in the soil too!



are easy to spot and get rid of, if you know what they look like. Slugs lay eggs under stones, pavers, boards, plant debris or wherever they can find a hiding spot. The eggs are usually clustered in groups and look like little BB's, but are a creamy color. By finding and destroying these eggs before they hatch, you will take care of hundreds of the slimy leaf-chompers before they can get to your plants.

- Be on the lookout for slugs and their eggs. Fall is egg laying time again for the slimy creatures. Eggs

- Begin to get plants ready for winter by holding back on the watering and stop any fertilizing this

month. The plants need to get toughened up for the coming winter. If watered frequently and fed too late in the season the leaves are more tender and apt to freeze or be severely damaged.

- September is an excellent month to start a lawn from scratch or over seed a thin lawn. In fact this time of year is about the best and fastest time to start a lawn.

- Fertilize the lawn now if you haven't done so for a couple of months. With the cooler weather and rains on the way you will notice the lawns becoming greener and thicker again, naturally.

- Pull up begonia tubers before

it gets too cold or at least move the pot into a garage or shed. Let foliage die down naturally, then remove foliage, lift bulb out of the soil and store the begonia tubers separately in paper bags (breathable!) in a protected cool, not cold, environment like a basement or a chilly room.

- Dahlias: to dig or not to dig? If you dig up the dahlias to store them, and then divide and replant in the spring, they will continue to come up bigger and better every year. If left in the ground eventually they will poop out, getting many smaller stems and fewer flowers.

Dig the tubers at least one week after a frost and after the stalks have died down. Dahlias dug too early will not store well. Cut the stalks down to 6-8", shake the loose soil off the clumps (don't wash the clump) then allow the



tubers occasionally for any rot developing. You will divide and replant them next May.

- This is a great month to divide iris and other spring and early summer blooming perennials. Iris and other perennials can become overcrowded and that slows down on its flowering show. By lifting the clumps, cutting out the old centers or mushy parts and then replanting the leading growing edge of the clump immediately back into the garden, the perennials can again take off and give you additional years of flowers.

### VEGETABLE GARDEN

- You can still seed these crops right into the garden: Arugula, beets, cabbage (for spring harvest), carrots, endive, fava beans, garlic cloves, lettuce, kale, mache, onion sets, radish, salad greens and shallot bulbs.

- Mulch the mature carrots, beets, turnips and parsnips for winter harvesting. By applying good 3-5" thick mulch you can store these veggies right out in the garden. Pull some up whenever you want to fix some for a meal.

- Harvest the winter squash when the 'ground spot' turns from white to a cream or gold color. (The ground spot is just what it sounds like, the part of the squash fruit that lay on the ground.) Winter squash can be harvested whenever the fruits have turned a deeper color and the rind is hard. Harvest the main part of the crop in September or October, before the heavy frosts. Cut squash from the vines

carefully, leaving two inches of stem attached if possible. Squash that is not fully mature, has been injured, or had their stems knocked off, or has been subjected to heavy frost will not keep.

- Harvest potatoes when the tops die down and before the first frost. Dig up the tubers, being careful not to nick the spuds with the shovel. Any tubers that have a damaged spot from digging should be cooked up and not stored. By hand remove any soil clinging to the potatoes and then leave them on top of the soil for a few hours to dry out - if they are stored damp, they will rot. Leaving them on the soil surface in the sun will harden the skin slightly, doubling the storage time.

- Protect the tomatoes, peppers and eggplant from early frost. Drape the plants with Harvest Guard protective yard and garden cover. Pick green tomatoes and ripen indoors if cold weather threatens.

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