



Seldovia Gazette

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Thursday, July 10, 2008

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Swan Island Dahlias Visits Seldovia

Narrative by Tamara Blodgett



Left to right: Ginger Pitts, Ann Traylor, Virginia Gitts, Margaret Gitts and Marti Shirley
(Ginger, Ann and Marti all reside in the Kenai-Soldatna area)

Photography by Mary Glover and Tamara Blodgett

Seldovians cloister to hear dahlia tips, terms and tidbits...

Enthusiastic gardeners keep good company...

It was standing room only in Seldovian Jerry Swanson's greenhouse on Wednesday, July 9th, as Gitts gave pointers about how to plant dahlia tubers (horizontally, not vertically). She demonstrated how to properly separate tubers for maximizing growth and what part of the tuber won't have success in growing (no "eyes," no bloom).



A showing of fifteen plus people gathered to hear Margaret Gitts' presentation about their family farm and their famous dahlias grown on the [Swan Island Farm in Canby, Oregon](#) . The Swan Island Farm is the largest grower of hybrid dahlias in the United States. Raised on a dairy farm in Ferndale, Washington, Mrs. Gitts is no stranger to the outdoors and the wonders of nature. Margaret and her late husband, Nicholas, were the founders of the family business.

Mrs. Gitts was accompanied by her daughter, Victoria, who is also in the family business with a twist.



Victoria ("Vicki", pictured above) is a master flower arranger and arranges flowers for weddings and just about any other notable event. She is famous for her dahlia waterfall arrangements which are on display during the Swan Island Dahlias Annual Dahlia Festival held the weekend prior to the Labor Day holiday and on Labor Day weekend in Canby. Margaret and Victoria's trip was sponsored by the Seldovia Chamber of Commerce's Beautification Committee which has weekly meetings each Monday at 11AM .



Gitts emphasized that in this climate dahlias should be started indoors (greenhouse or "cool porch") around mid-May. An interesting tip to lengthen a dahlias life span as a cut flower was to treat it the same way one would a delphinium or lilac bloom. A "water bath" in 160 degree water where the stem (without leaves) is submerged for upwards of one hour should do the trick to force the bloom's continuing hydration once placed in an arrangement.

Nothing is complete without a little sustenance...

If talking about gorgeous flowers in the height of summer were not enough, delicious food was also provided by diligent volunteers consisting of Black Bean Corn Tortillas and fresh watermelon.



Everyone walked away with a free dahlia tuber and a smile. The Beautification Committee would like to welcome all volunteers to their weekly meetings which will resume on the 21st of July at 11AM. Get planting Seldovia and enjoy our brief summer! Please visit the [Swan Island Dahlia website at www.dahlias.com](http://www.dahlias.com).



Close up of tuber being divided



Margaret Gitts explaining the various parts of the tuber



Margaret Gitts demonstration on how to divide a tuber



As you can see from the smiles, it was a funny moment!



Suzie Stranik, Jerry Swanson and Peggy Keesecker



Suzie Stranik introducing Margaret Gitts



Lettuce for State Fair Exhibit? Jerry Swanson's green thumb at large!!!!



Even Jerry's dog, Poppy, gets to smell the roses(?)!!!!

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