



Alberta Dahlia and Glad Society

By Debbie Hatt, Secretary & Trial Garden Director

By Debbie Hatt & Shirley Cullum Sept 12, 2025

The Alberta Dahlia and Glad Society is a dynamic and thriving club, supported by a dedicated group of volunteers. Over the years, we have grown and evolved to meet the changing needs of our members while staying true to our passion for dahlias and glads.

We are proud to host **Canada's only dahlia trial garden**, which also serves as the growing site for **All America Select gladiolus varieties**. Each week, our members come together to tend to the garden, creating a welcoming space where new members can learn from experienced growers about the care and cultivation of these stunning flowers. (Ken Jensen planting the AAS glads in the trial garden).

Tuber Sales Success Story: From the very beginning, our club members have contributed their extra tubers for sale, with all proceeds supporting the club. In 2024, we found ourselves with a surplus of unsold tubers, so we got creative, potting them up for sale at farmers' markets and offering them to nurseries at a discounted price for resale. This approach paid off, bringing in a total of \$8,000 in sales that year. (Terri-Lynn Dodd selling dahlia plants at a farmer's market in 2024).



In 2025, we took things to the next level by upgrading our website to include an Online Shop. Setting it up was no small task—it required photographing each variety, writing descriptions, and ensuring proper classification numbers were in place. But the effort was well worth it! We launched with over 250 varieties, initially offering sales exclusively to members at a 20% discount during the first week. After that, the store opened to the public, and orders started pouring in from across Canada.

Some varieties sold out quickly, but thanks to ongoing donations, our inventory remained fresh and constantly updated. The online shop has been a fantastic addition, making it easier than ever to share our passion for tubers while supporting the club's growth.

When our online shop launched, visitors were welcomed with a beautifully organized display of dahlia photos, each accompanied by its classification number. Ordering was effortless—simply clicking on a photo opened a full-sized image along with a detailed description, allowing customers to easily add tubers to their cart. Once our online shop closed on May 20, 2025, we sold the remaining tubers at a local plant exchange, ensuring nothing went to waste. By the end of the

season, our total tuber sales reached an impressive \$10,000, marking another successful year for our club!



Trial Garden: Under the leadership and inspiration of our club President, Shirley Cullum, we have successfully relocated the trial garden from the home of Lorne & Marilyn McArthur in Red Deer County to a fenced area at The Olds College of Agriculture and Technology (Central Alberta). It's a good partnership and we share the fenced area with a Lily Trial Garden and other student growing projects. The Olds College maintains walking trails through their Botanic Gardens and Wetlands; 25 acres of aesthetically beautiful, diverse and well-maintained gardens and

constructed wetlands. The area is open anytime all summer (just close the gate behind you) or you can call Shirley at 403-443-0982 or Herb at 403-350-9206 for more information.

Education & Training: We provide learning opportunities for everyone interested in dahlias and glads. Each week, our trial garden work bees are followed by quick 30-minute learning sessions, ensuring hands-on experience and knowledge-sharing among members. Our goal is to support and encourage those who wish to deepen their expertise—whether simply learning about cultivation or pursuing accreditation as a dahlia or glad judge. We are proud to have several Senior Dahlia Judges in our club, with more members currently completing the program. Additionally, we are in the final stages of establishing the Accredited Glad Spike Judge status for several members. Special recognition goes to Debbie Hatt (Secretary) who served on the ADS exam committee and played a key role in developing the NAGC Glad Spike Judging Modules, books, and pins—helping shape the future of glad judging standards. Reg Powys-Lybbe teaching in 2022.



Events: We have two main summer events.: On August 9, 2025 we had our grand opening along with our annual 'Summer Celebration' at our trial garden location in Olds, Alberta. On this day we had the glad spike "point scoring" judge training overseen by our very own Reg Powys-Lybbe who is the ONLY accredited glad spike judge in Canada. This was followed by a fun workshop on how to

make and wrap a floral bouquet, and how to make a bouquet in a vase. Shirley Cullum instructed and each attendee took home two bouquets. The day ended with a delicious pot-luck supper with smoked brisket and homemade desserts. Our second event is our annual flower show (and quilt display) held in tents at the trial garden location (August 23 and 24, 2025). Members and non-members can exhibit their best blooms for official judging. During and after the show we sell flower bouquets and visitors are always very impressed with the event. (Flower show and quilt display 2024).



Other community involvement: We provide dahlia and glad judges to two shows in the area (Rumsey and Trochu) to enable them to have sanctioned shows. We donated dahlia tubers to the Trochu Arboretum and, in the past, we have donated dahlia plants to the Red Deer Hospital. We donated dahlia tubers to a group of young gardeners and our member, Terri-Lynn Dodd, is providing weekly mentorship with the goal that these young people will exhibit their blooms in the local garden show. Our club also sponsors the cash prizes for this youth category in the Red Deer River (Rumsey) Show. Our Grand Opening event on August 9, 2025 had Olds College community and member representatives and we were busy doing garden tours!

Our Awesome Volunteers: No article would be complete without mentioning some of our most hard-working volunteers. Mike Walliser is our Vice-President and membership chair and keeps track of all the member payments and status, not an easy job. He takes a major role in the tuber sales and oversees the irrigation system and the party tents. He is a senior dahlia judge and is vital to our events. Herb Noyes (Board Member) is always on hand to help with whatever is needed and we couldn't do without him. Ron (Treasurer) and Terri-Lynn Dodd (Board Member) are active in the



'Canadian Dahlia and Glad Society' and vital to our club with their unwavering support in labour and support in all the events we have.

There are many more volunteers whom we count on, and we couldn't exist without all of them!

Finally, we want to recognize Shirley Cullum, our President, whose leadership and vision have kept us all engaged and inspired. She was the driving force behind the relocation of the trial garden, forming the plan and leading by example through hard work and

countless hours of dedication. (The Grand Opening of the new Trial Garden August 9, 2025).