

2021

NORTH CENTRAL TRIAL GARDEN

Thank goodness it's Fall and the end of the 2021 growing season for the North Central Trial Garden! How could it be worse than 2020 when the University of Minnesota's Landscape Arboretum where our trial garden is located closed due to the pandemic, and we had to find a temporary location for the garden?

Our trial garden had been left fallow for a year. We returned to find that the weeds had taken over, the fence had been damaged, the wood planks had rotted and the irrigation system had clogged & cracked due to disuse. With so much preliminary work yet to be done we anxiously awaited the Arboretum's announcement of its re-opening to the public & volunteers. We received notice that we could finally access the grounds the latter part of May, and still with masks and social distancing the garden was planted on May 29th – 2 weeks later than desired. A week later the hot, dry, ninety-plus degree weather moved in and stayed!

Plants were severely stunted, foliage appeared sickly and many entries produced very sparse, deformed blooms or none at all throughout the season. It had come to our attention that Arboretum staff had used *Round-Up* for weed control in our absence that may also have contributed to the struggling plants! Judging day was Aug 14, but due to a computer glitch, the Arb was unable to generate entry tickets to our judges. Even though we couldn't obtain tickets to get our judges out to judge, there were only a few entries that had produced blooms by that time to evaluate anyway. Judging was re-scheduled to Sept 11 when slightly cooler temps and minimal rain started to rejuvenate the plants, but many were still not performing well enough to judge (DNS). The first two weeks of Oct saw a major improvement in the garden, and late teams were formed to re-judge entries not evaluated earlier. The garden was dug Oct. 30 and as was typical of the entire growing season, it was a dry, unusually hot day!

We are currently in the process of searching for a new location for the TG due to the difficulties we experience with policies that limit us in obtaining garden volunteers and judges. We plan to downsize but will keep the current location next year while we procure & finalize a new site.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to Larry Bagge as he retires as Trial Garden Director. The amount of mileage and man-hours he invested in keeping the garden alive with daily (and often more) trips to hand-water the plants went above & beyond. **Thank you, Larry!** We look forward to your expertise as we develop our future trial garden!

Top-scoring dahlias in NCTG:

Felida Splendor A LC DR Toedtli 88.57; **KA's Bo Peep** M IC DP Albrecht 86.85;
KA's Papa John A ID W Albrecht 86.83; **20th Ave Old Major** M FD L Gibson 86.75;
Nighty Night M FD DR Gitts 86.71; **20th Ave Tradition** M FD W Gibson 86.67;
Oldoc Combustion O R Gawthrop 86.6; **Clearview Nieve** ST DP Parshall 86.05;
Skipley Prelude B IC LB Williams 85.85 **Skipley Swan Song** M FD W Williams 85.75