

I, Robert Slarke, and the Dahlia Society of NSW & ACT Inc. Committee,
nominate **John Woodfield** for the 'Dahl' Award.

Has contributed greatly to dahlias in Australia

John Woodfield has grown, bred, exhibited, judged and promoted dahlias at the highest level in the ACT and NSW for nearly 6 decades.

He began growing dahlias in September 1963 when he and June moved the new Woden Valley area of Hughes in the ACT. A greenfield site, the property was

surrounded by bare blocks of land with paling fences and farm grasses still growing in the backyards. From a modest beginning, this modest man has excelled in growing, breeding, and exhibiting dahlias, and sharing his knowledge with others over many decades. John and June still live at their Hughes property.



In 2007 John was awarded the President of the Garden Clubs of Australia award for service by an individual for outstanding contributions to all gardeners.

In 2010 he was also awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for Service to the Community through the Horticultural Society of Canberra.

It should be acknowledged that without considerable support from June, John would not have been able to achieve all that he has with the dahlias.

Promotes the Dahlia

Promotion of dahlias covers the full range of activities for John. He has promoted dahlias through public exhibitions of his flowers at shows, by visiting and talking to members of various Garden Clubs, and by opening his garden up to Garden Club and group visits over many years, including opening for the Australian Open Garden Scheme in March 2011.

Contributes to the management of society/societies

John was a foundation member of the Dahlia Grower's Association of NSW & ACT in 1976, elected as one of the Vice-Presidents, and helped produce the first set of standards prepared by that group. At that time there was a wide divergence between show schedules and judging standards at shows in NSW and ACT, leading to exhibitor confusion and frustration. The production of standards that John helped to organise was a major improvement in the development and exhibition of dahlia flowers. The association changed its name in 1978 to the Dahlia Society of NSW & ACT, became incorporated in 1991, and John has been a contributing member to this day.

In 1998, John together with Ron Wilkes and representatives of the other States, produced the Standards and Judging Rules of the Dahlia for the Australian Dahlia Council, which in later years became the Dahlia Society of Australia.

As recognition of his achievements, John has been awarded Life Membership of the Dahlia Society of NSW & ACT Inc.

Supports shows

Starting close to home, John & June began showing dahlias locally at Bungendore, Queanbeyan and Canberra in 1966, winning two champion ribbons in the first year, and continue to win ribbons to this day. Over many years John continued supporting his local shows as well as Cooma, Gunning, Crookwell, Yass, Kiama, Berry, Nowra, Kangaroo Valley, Cobargo, Bega, Goulburn, Blayney, Orange Horticultural, Lithgow Workies, Mittagong Horticultural, Mittagong RSL, and in Sydney at Blacktown and Castle Hill, and began exhibiting at the Sydney Royal in the 1970's.

John always supported shows with top quality blooms and as a result won many championships including his first NSW & ACT State Championship at Nowra in 1989. He

also won his first championship at the Sydney Royal in 1989 and in 2013 was nominated by the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW to be recognised in the The Parade of Champions for Excellence in Agriculture. In 2016 he won all four dahlia championships at Sydney and 34 champion ribbons.

He fondly remembers the Bicentennial Dahlia Championship at the 1988 Horticultural Society of Canberra Autumn Show. John invited interstate judges Nev Neumann, Bob Trotter and Jim Robertson to participate, and all had an enjoyable weekend of fellowship.

Introduced dahlias of quality

John's first cultivar release was '**Lesley Freda**', a miniature to small pale mauve Decorative which won many champions through the 1980's and 1990's, followed by a number of dahlia cultivars bred under the 'Woden' prefix. '**Woden RV**' was the only Cactus produced (medium to large red over laid pale yellow) which sadly did not last the test of time.

'**Woden Surprise**', a Pompon bred from 'Ray's Gold', is still the only worthwhile Pom in a rich pink colouring.

Since the 2000's, John has concentrated on Collerettes and Singles. '**Woden Hope**' is a small well-formed all-white Collerette, followed by Singles '**Woden Wonder White**', '**Woden Lilac**', and the deep mauve '**Woden Miss**'. The most recent release has been '**Woden Whitelight**', a Single with pure white good-sized rounded flat petals and a small yellow halo.

Mentor to prospective members and new growers

John and June's home has been the venue of judging and growing training sessions for many years in early January and February as the plants are pruned and tied. New growers are also trained in the selection of suitable flowers with respect to the judging standards.

Judging

John received his Judges badge in the early 1980's. He is a respected judge renowned for his fairness, common sense and excellence at shows ranging from local shows to the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (Sydney Royal Easter Show) and Horticultural Society of Canberra. His first judging appointment at the Sydney Royal was in 1983.

Judging appointments have taken him to Kiama, Nowra, Berry and Kangaroo Valley on the south coast of NSW; Bega, Cobargo, and Moruya on the far south coast; elsewhere in NSW such as Nimmitabel, Yass, Jerrawa, Mittagong, Blayney and Orange, as well as other smaller shows, the names and memories of which have been lost in the mists of time.

Presentations for meetings, conferences, and field days

John has spoken at a number of national conferences on subjects such as 'The Off Season', 'Dahlia Tubers in Plastic', 'Xeriscape Garden', and 'Comparison of Ball and Semi-Decorative Types'.

Contributions to publications

Over a period of decades, John has written articles for the **Canberra Times** broadsheet, **Canberra Gardener** book which provides advice on growing plants in the ACT, **Horticultural Society of Canberra** quarterly bulletin, and **Dahlia Society of NSW & ACT** magazine. His articles are written in such a way as to be informative, entertaining and easily understood by the general public, club members and plant breeders alike.

An ambassador for the dahlia

Having grown, bred, exhibited, judged and promoted dahlias at the highest level for the best part of 60 years, John Woodfield is the ultimate dahlia ambassador.