

Dahlia Society of Australia 'DAHL' Award 2024

I, Caitlyn Mason and Peter Mason nominate Steven Wedd for the 'Dahl' Award.

Has contributed greatly to dahlias in Australia.

Steven Wedd is passionate about breeding new dahlia cultivars. You can see his face light up when the Coorabell prefix is mentioned. He and his family breed dahlias under the prefix Coorabell named after their locality. Steven's skills include breeding complex colours in all different forms that are popular with floral designers, flower farmers and exhibition growers. His focus is on breeding new varieties that meet the rigid criteria of show standards. An example of this is his Coorabell Zoe, there would not be a show where it did not place, and a newer example would be Coorabell Caitlyn in a beautiful shade of dusty pink which the florists adore, but similarly winning in the seedling category at the Northern Districts Horticultural Show in Brisbane. More recently, Coorabell Kerrie took out Grand Champion at the Queensland Dahlia Society State Show for 2024. Coorabell dahlias grow well in most Australia climates.

Promotes the dahlia.

The old adage you can't sell a secret rings true. Steven and his family are famous in the Byron Bay area for their dahlias. Steven is the flower man and he is very generous with blooms and tubers which promote the dahlia to a varied audience. Steven is involved in a number of garden societies and promotes the dahlia through his volunteer work, as well as hosting garden clubs from across NSW and QLD at his home. Recently, Steven's contributions to horticulture were recognised as part of the QCGC Biennial Awards at the end of 2023. He was recognised for his breeding program, show attendance and exhibits, hosting of numerous events and contributions to QDS, DSA, and local garden clubs. There were 5 other nominations. Furthermore, he promotes the dahlia through hosting a tuber sale at his home (a major fundraiser for us) where a portion of profits go back to the Queensland Dahlia Society. He is also very generous with QDS members and new growers giving away a huge number of tubers at our annual Christmas party every year.

Contributes to the management of society/societies

Steven is the current secretary of the Queensland Dahlia Society and served on the committee for 10 + years, sometimes doing two roles including secretary and treasurer for a time. Similarly, he is secretary of the Dahlia Society of Australia and has been for seven years too. There is not a QDS meeting that Steven misses, except for when Anastasia Palecek locked him out of Queensland, but he still dialled into all meetings during lockdown times. Steven's work for QDS can only be described as selfless, it takes a huge amount of time to field through all the inquiries, registering new members, organising field days, opening his garden up to members and in the running of the society. This is not to mention his work for the Dahlia Society of Australia.

Supports shows

Steven and his family enter many shows through Queensland and Northern NSW. They have the most entries in our QDS state show bringing 180 + blooms which fills a huge amount of our hall and aids in creating a great show for visitors. If you are wondering, it takes two large vehicles to fit so many blooms in, given how we stage in Queensland i.e. individual bottles which are all staged prior to arrival. Not only does Steven enter a whole lot of blooms, but his

role of secretary also includes the distribution of the schedule, ensuring all jobs required to assist in the running of the show are filled and marketing too.

Introduced dahlias of quality

Steven and his family have bred many notable dahlias including Coorabell Astrid, Coorabell Moonglow, Coorabell Sylvia, Coorabell Noel, Coorabell Heather and Coorabell Zoe just to name a few. Every year he introduces more after a three plus year assessment period.

Encourages new members

An example of this is when Steven opened his garden up recently, not for an official field day, but for members to visit and enjoy his and his family's blooms and stay for morning tea. Steven has also started a tuber dividing workshop every year where new and not-so-new members can come and learn his digging, dividing and storing techniques. New members have been especially keen on garden visits in our society and the relationships built during these events creates a real sense of community, encourages new members to keep growing and inspires all.

Mentor to prospective members and new growers

Steven's role of secretary means all new members connect with him first. He then navigates their questions, encourages and mentors. The best thing about Steven is he has no secrets. You ask him something and if he knows the answer, he'll tell you. That's reassuring for new growers who are nervous and especially new exhibitors. New and prospective members know they just have to pick up the phone and call Steven and he will help with any questions they have. If Steven knows the answer, he will tell you.

Judging

Steven does not judge.

Publications

Steven is a regular contributor to the QDS newsletters on a variety of topics dealing with storage, soil preparation, propagation, breeding etc. He has not had articles in Tuber Talk.

Presentations for meetings, conferences and field days.

Steven was a teacher, so it's always a joy to see his presentations. In fact, at our QDS tuber stall held at the Wedd's home. the Northern NSW branch (we had to separate QLD/NSW sales during Covid) sold out by morning tea-time. Steven took the opportunity to teach and mentor fellow volunteers and visitors on the process of propagation and in true Steven style he encouraged guests to 'learn by doing.' During this same tuber sale, he showed guests how to divide clumps too. Recently at our field day, we were lucky enough to hear Steven do a talk on exhibition dahlias bred in Queensland and the history of some of the dahlias we know and love i.e. those with the prefix Downs, Bracken, Moray, Granite and Coorabell. We had lots of new members join us on the field day (nearly 50 in total attendees) and Steven took this opportunity to present on the storage medium he successfully uses at Coorabell. Steven has given presentations at a number of DSA Conferences as well as participating on panels.

Contributions to newsletters etc.

Steven is the most regular contributor to our newsletter with an article from him in nearly every issue. One particular article, Tuber vs Cutting proved very timely saving his patch from a great deal of rot, which has seen a lot of other QDS members adopt his method and achieve

great results with cuttings too. Another notable article was an account of how his isolation breeding patch works, from selecting seed parents, how he isolates them, seed starting to raising and how he focuses on one type of dahlia each year.

An ambassador for the dahlia.

An ambassador has many key qualities in which Steven possesses. He is reliable, you know if Steven says he will do something, he will. He follows up on things and gets the job done. Steven has a way of connecting with people and fostering relationships. His honesty is admirable. Steven is the sort of person to say, “you should be out of novice and up there exhibiting in this class” if he thinks your flower is worthy. It’s about the flowers for Steven, not about winning or losing. Steven’s other greatest ambassador trait is his knowledge. He has tried so many dahlias in his climate and is a wealth of knowledge on what varieties work and what don’t in his region. Steven is always keen to share his knowledge openly and freely with both flower farmers and exhibition growers. He is a true plantsman!