

Lavant Horticultural Society

WHICH CLASS IS MY DAHLIA?

For LHS Annual Shows and members' Autumn Flower Competitions

This attempts to give some guidance regarding the four dahlia classes that are included in our schedules, as there is often some confusion about which of these classes any particular Dahlia variety belongs in.

Fortunately, we only need to identify three classes of dahlia: Decorative, Cactus/Semi-Cactus and Waterlily. Any variety that does not belong in any of these three classes falls into the "other than above" class.

However, don't think you can just put your dahlias in "other than above" class if you are not sure which class they belong in. If the judge considers that any of the blooms entered in the "other than above" class really belong in one of the three other dahlia classes specified in the schedule, he will disqualify them from the "other than above" class as "not according to schedule" (NAS).

Since both Cactus and Semi-Cactus dahlias are combined in a single class in our schedules, at least we are spared the need to differentiate between them. Cactus/Semi-Cactus dahlias are quite distinctive, and, as in the case of the Waterlily, the shape is reminiscent of the plant it is named after.

The definitions below are based on those given by the National Dahlia Society and, in some cases, the RHS. Where specialist terms are used, I have tried to explain them in layman's language; I hope it is understandable. There are also images of several dahlia cultivars typical of that classification.

Perhaps the classification and name of your dahlia were provided when you bought it. In this case there is no problem, unless you suspect that it does not conform to the relevant class description mentioned below. It would not be the first time a plant was sold that was not true to its description.

If you just know the name of your dahlia, but not its class, you can look it up alphabetically in the World Dahlia Directory on the Dahlia World website at www.dahliaworld.co.uk/dahliadirectory.htm - just click on the initial letter of the name at the bottom of the page.

The class is shown in the column headed "type" – in the abbreviations in this column look for the last letter, or sometimes the last two letters: C = Cactus, D = Decorative, SC = Semi-Cactus, WL = Waterlily. These one or two letters may be preceded by an indicator of the size: Min = miniature, S = small, M = medium, L = large. So SSC = small semi-cactus; LD = large decorative etc. However, there is no differentiation by size in the classes in our schedules.

Sometimes the same name may have been used for several completely different cultivars. For instance, one of the most typical waterlily dahlias is 'Cameo'. However, the list shows 11 different versions of 'Cameo', only one of which shows the type as "WL". i.e. waterlily. However, even if there is such confusion for your dahlia, you may well still be able to identify the correct class in our schedule from the descriptions given below. If it does not fit into any of the classifications shown below, then it should go in the "other than above" class. However, if you are not sure, please contact me.

I hope this helps.

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DAHLIA CLASSIFICATION

CACTUS & SEMI-CACTUS DAHLIAS

Cactus dahlias have fully double blooms, the ray florets (*i.e. the petals that form most of the bloom*) are usually pointed, the majority narrow and revolute (*i.e. their side edges are rolled backwards/downwards*) for **65% or more** of their length and either straight or incurving.

Semi-cactus dahlias: the only difference is that the ray florets (*i.e. the petals that form most of the bloom*) are revolute (*i.e. their side edges are rolled backwards/downwards*) for **less than 65%, but more than 25%** of their length.

For both cactus and semi-cactus, the depth of the bloom should be two thirds or more of the diameter.



DECORATIVE DAHLIAS

Decorative dahlias have fully double blooms showing no disc (*i.e. the very centre of the bloom is completely hidden by the petals*). The ray florets (*i.e. the petals that form most of the bloom*) are generally broad and flat and may be involute (*i.e. with their side edges rolled forwards/inwards*) for no more than 75% of their length or slightly twisted and usually bluntly pointed.

The depth of the bloom should be two thirds or more of the diameter.



WATERLILY DAHLIAS

Waterlily dahlias have fully double blooms characterised by broad ray florets (*i.e. the petals that form most of the bloom*) that are slightly involute along their length (*i.e. their side edges are slightly rolled forwards/inwards*) giving a saucer shaped appearance to the bloom.

The depth of the bloom should be approximately one third of the diameter.

