

## THE DAHLIA AS A SHOW FLOWER.

taken place in the show and fancy dahlia in the last 25 years is in the outline, well shaped petal and perfect centre, the flowers of the present day requiring little or no dressing in comparison to the time it took 30 years since to prepare a stand of dahlias for exhibition.

*Improvement in Habit.*—The improvement in the flower has also had some effect on the habit, and the show varieties of the present day are not nearly so tall in habit as those grown 25 years since.

*Potting.*—I might say a few words as to the preparation of the plant to produce show flowers, although the subject has been described in another paper under the heading of cultivation. The plants intended to plant out to produce show flowers, should be potted from the small five inch pots (in the early part of May) into 4 inch, and placed in a cold frame until planted out early in June.

Nearly all the varieties make strong plants, and succeed well if grown from cutting, but a few varieties such as Bendigo, Mrs. Foster, Burgundy, Herbert Turner, etc., which are very double, or are apt to come with green centres, are better grown from pot roots, or old divided ground roots.

*Planting.*—The plants should be planted five feet apart; if in a border, arranging for the tallest flowerst at the back. After the ground has been squared out, dig holes about two feet square and the same depth into each hole put a spadeful of light potting shed or other soil mixed with a little manure—this is to give the plant a start—break up the soil taken out of the hole before returning it, and after the plant is planted lightly tread when replacing it. A light stick will hold the plant for a few days, and when planting is finished put a stout stake four to five feet high to each plant, and tie the stem of the plant to the

stake rather loosely to allow for the stem to swell in due course. As soon as the main stem throws out laterals, add four smaller stakes to secure the side branches, to keep them well tied so that plenty of light and air are admitted to the plants during growth.

*Disbudding and Thinning.*—There is no general rule to disbudding. Every variety has to be studied in this respect; to commence to disbud some coarse growing varieties, such as Champion Rollo, Royal Queen, etc., as soon as the buds appear would make the flowers coarse the whole season, whilst all varieties should be sparingly disbudded at first, by taking only one bud away, and then within three weeks of the exhibition the grower can choose the bud which is perfect, and will be likely to be in flower about the date of the exhibition, and remove all the other buds. Should the variety be a thin and small flower, then remove all the side shoots down from the bud to the stem; but should the variety be inclined to become coarse, only thin sparingly until a week or so before the show.

*Watering.*—This is most essential to show a dahlia, the plant should never be allowed to be dry at the root from the time of the planting, and I think I might here state that after the plants have been staked and tied out, the surface of the soil should be forked over, and the plants top dressed with a good dressing of stable manure; this will keep the roots moist, and encourage the roots to the surface to feed. Should the weather be hot and dry the plants should be sprinkled over head every night in addition to the watering at the roots which at first should not be excessive, but sufficient to keep them moist and growing. Heavy watering should be commenced three weeks before the exhibition, as the plants will be suffi-