

# Dahlia Gardens To Be On View

By BETTY FRANKEL  
Special Writer

"Dahlias are a man's flower," said Arthur Rocheleau as he showed a visitor the gorgeous dahlias he has growing behind his house on Inkster Road in Redford.

"Perhaps it's because the plants, themselves, are large and heavy. Perhaps it's because the flowers are so big and spectacular."

Whatever the reason, men do enjoy growing these plants and the majority of the 75 members of the Southeastern Michigan Dahlia Society are men.

Rocheleau's garden is in full bloom and is one of three open to the public for a tour sponsored by the society on Sunday, Sept. 23.

The Rocheleau's garden is open starting at 3:30 p.m. The address is 16212 Inkster Road between Five Mile and Six Mile Rds.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Gies's garden, 2006 Riverdale, Detroit, (east of Telegraph between Joy and W. Chicago), is on view at 1:30 and Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Trute's garden, 24246 Norfolk, Detroit (west of Telegraph between Seven and Eight Mile Rd.), is open at 12:30.

Arthur Rocheleau estimates that he has over 50 different varieties in his garden. He has little miniatures and medium sized ones, and great huge dahlias with flowers over a foot across.

Some have staggery, mop-like heads. Others have petals so precisely formed and placed they look like tiles on a roof. Some have flat petals. Others have petals rolled into tubes or quills.

His favorite is a pink one called Surprise. He also has a special fondness for a large orange and white bi-color known as Holland Festival, and for a special little one called Johnny Casey which looks like an oversized red and white peppermint candy.

"Arthur Godfrey is the big red one with bronze," pointed out Rocheleau, "and this one here is Richard Rodgers: There's Dottie D, and Grace and that red one over there is Uchua from Japan."

As he talked, Rocheleau pulled a length of cord from his back pocket and tied a floppy plant more securely to a stake.

Each plant is fastened to a tall stake. Many plants are four or five feet tall, and have flowers that are bigger than a dinner plate. To keep the stems straight and the huge flowers from bending down, staking is an important and necessary part of their culture.

Mrs. Rocheleau, who enjoys the dahlias, too, admitted some medium sized plants with deep pink blooms, and almost automatically as she looked at the plants she pinched off some of the small side buds.

When questioned about this, she explained that as she checks the plants she does this disbudbing, as it is called, so that the main flower grows extra large. It is a process that many growers use to develop huge blooms that they can enter in competitions.

petition in shows and exhibitions.

Rocheleau, who has claimed many ribbons and awards for his dahlias, began growing them about ten years ago. He recalls that at first he had no success at all. He planted his first dahlia tubers in the shade beneath a tree. When they didn't produce any flowers he pulled them out and threw them in the trash.

Fortunately, his next door neighbor, who had more gardening experience, noticed his plight, and proceeded to give him some horticultural advice. Since then the Rocheleaus' dahlias have been thriving.

They have done so well, that gradually the Rocheleaus have devoted more and more space - and time - to them. Even their vegetable garden, a large rectangular plot that occupies over a quarter of the yard, has now been converted to a dahlia bed.

The first dahlias Rocheleau grew were inexpensive, unnamed "cheapies." Each year he has upgraded the collection and bought better varieties. Now only the choicest kinds are grown - each a potential prize-winner. Many new varieties can cost as much as \$15 a piece he explains.

In a few years when supplies become plentiful the same ones may sell for only \$2. However, dahlia fanciers who are always looking for something new and better to exhibit seek out the expensive new kinds.

Dahlias, which are natives of Mexico, are not winter hardy in our area. The tubers from which they grow must be stored in a frost-free place in the winter.

Rocheleau brings his cut of


storage around the first of April. He carefully divides the clumps, making sure that each resulting division has several "eyes" or buds from which the stems will sprout.

He starts these into growth in his garage under a fluorescent light above a work table. The tubers are spread out on trays filled with a thin layer of soil. As the sprouts begin to grow, Rocheleau can check to see which are "duds" that aren't growing at all.

Sometime around the first of October Rocheleau will dig up all the dahlia tubers. This will amount to six or seven bushels of tubers. To avoid mix-ups, the proper tag is removed from the stakes and wired to each clump as it is dug up.

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If last year's Christmas poinsettia spent the summer outdoors, it can bloom again this year if you give it some extra attention. Now, say Michigan State University horticulturists.

To meet the Christmas deadline, the forcing procedure must begin at the end of September. Bring the poinsettia indoors and place it in the sun before the first frost, which usually occurs around Sept. 15 in lower Michigan.

Keep the plant in complete darkness between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. daily from Sept. 30 until mid-December. Lamps, streetlights, and even TV flashlights should be avoided. By mid-December, color should begin to show in the petal-like leaves that we think of as flowers.

For best results keep your poinsettia where the temperature ranges from 60 to 70 degrees. Examine the soil every day, and when it feels dry to the touch, add enough water to soak the soil to the bottom of the pot.

# Fall Preview Showing

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Thurs., Sept. 20th

**WARREN**  
6:00 to 8:30 P.M.  
Fri., Sept. 21st

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10'	1.49	2.07	2.91	3.88	5.18	3.89
12'	1.91	2.81	4.35	5.48	6.70	4.67
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