

BERNIE (BERNARD) WILSON

2024 Inductee

Federation of Northwest Dahia Growers Hall of Fame

The North Central Washington Dahlia Society would like to nominate Bernie Wilson to the Federation of NW Dahlia Growers Hall of Fame. Bernie has been an integral part of the Pacific Northwest dahlia culture since he entered his first dahlia show in 1970. His home club is the Snohomish County Dahlia Society (SCDS), but he has also been a very influential member and longtime part of the North Central Washington Dahlia Society (NCWDS) scene. He has been a member of the Federation of NW Dahlia Growers and the American Dahlia Society for decades. Although he didn't actually join NCWDS until around 2007 or 2008, he has supported the Wenatchee area as a judge and exhibitor over a 40-year period. One of his mentors was Tony DeRooy (SCDS member, founder of Pacific NW Dahlia Conference, and Wenatchee/NCW clubs) during the early 1970s and 1980s. Bernie started hybridizing dahlias in the 1990s; his first introduction was in 2001 with Lakeview Premier. To date, he has introduced at least 25 varieties, including Lakeview Glow, Stanley Johnson Award winner in 2012.

Bernie has been generous with his time and his resources throughout his tenure in his dahlia societies as well as the Federation of NW Dahlia Growers. Bernie never fails to donate tubers and cuttings to the Jack Crawford Tuber Auction as well as to any local club who asks for it. The NCWDS credits Bernie for influencing our ability to raise money by suggesting we institute our Members Only Tuber Auction many years ago. He has donated tubers and time to our club activities, even though he has to drive almost 130 miles to get to Wenatchee. Bernie puts his money where his mouth is and never suggests things that he isn't willing to do himself. He has never missed the opportunity to represent the Federation as a senior judge at our Wenatchee-area dahlia shows and he has never missed our tuber auction. We are fairly certain that without the support that Bernie has provided to the NCWDS, this region would have never been selected to host the 57th ADS National Show.

Besides Bernie's reliability with his own clubs – he has long been a foundational part of Snohomish County DS activities – he has been a fixture as a team leader and senior judge in Whatcom County, Skagit County, PSDA, and other clubs across the northwest. He usually grows about 220 dahlia plants and around 100 seedlings. He has also judged at ADS National shows hosted by the Federation, in 2014 and the ADS National Show in 2009. He regularly participates as a judge at the Tacoma Trial Garden at Pt. Defiance. Bernie has participated as a member of dahlia culture panels at Federation workshops over the years, always willing to share his experience and successes, even his failures, with other dahlia growers. He has long been a part of the Snohomish County Dahlia Society annual show team, hauling equipment and materials needed to turn Floral Hall in Everett's Forest Park into a stunning display of dahlias. He has also joined other members of Snohomish County Dahlia Society to help plant and maintain the dahlia garden at the Great Northern Railway train depot. He has also been one of those people who help put up chairs after Federation Workshops. You can always count on Bernie to help wherever he can.

Besides the formal appearances Bernie regularly makes as a judge and panel member, he has mentored many new dahlia growers. He shares not only his expertise and experience, but he also is extremely generous with his cuttings and tubers, at times giving away so many of his top cultivars that he doesn't save enough for himself. Many Federation members, as well as those of us in Wenatchee are better growers today because of Bernie's steady and gentle hand in our dahlia educations. He is one of the most unselfish growers in the Federation and at the same time, one of the most humble. He isn't comfortable with the limelight and avoids political positions, yet his leadership has been felt throughout the Federation ever since he has been a part of it.

Bernie has raised the bar when it comes to challenging other exhibitors to compete at a higher level, specifically in the realm of 5-bloom and most recently 9-bloom entries. He has inspired several growers to try to snatch those rosettes from him in recent shows, but that is a difficult task to accomplish.

Bernie's reach extends far beyond what he has accomplished in his own garden or in his own primary club. It has impacted the growth and development of countless growers across the state of Washington who have benefited from his skill, kindness and mentorship. If anyone has earned the honor of being inducted into the Federation Hall of Fame, it is Bernie Wilson.