

Dahlias—World Capital Here? Freedlander Plants 375 Varieties on 6 Acres

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Haywood County is well on the way to becoming the dahlia capital of the world

The present six acres with 10,000 dahlias on the farm of A. L. Freedlander, RFD 1, is already one of the largest staked displays in the United States. There are now 30,000 blooms and by Labor Day, there should be 50,000 to 75,000 or perhaps more blooms.

It is certainly the largest quantity ever grown in the United States or probably elsewhere high up in the mountains.

Usually dahlias are grown in quantity on flat land such as in the country of Holland and various places in this country.

There are now planted here on six acres some 375 varieties. Freedlander specializes in 8-inch to 14-inch diameter blooms called Dinner Plate Dahlias, although he goes to the other extreme and does have some pom-poms.

Freedlander became interested in dahlias a number of years ago. It was 10 years ago that he actually got into the business of raising the bulbs for pleasure, and this year decided to do it commercially. His blooms won prizes at the State Fair in Raleigh last year.

He found this immediate area the ideal place for dahlias, and this year he plans wide expansion on several fronts. He wants 15 acres, some 3,000 varieties, and to employ a full-time horticulturist to look after the bulbs, and develop new varieties.

He already has two green houses, and a third is planned.

Freedlander has already bought the bulb business of one nationally known grower and is negotiating with a second. One of the growers is in his seventies and no one in his family feels able or is interested in carrying on the business on a large scale.

"I am interested in preserving the knowledge these men and women have gained over the years, and keep developing that on which they spent so many years of hard work," he said. "It takes a long time and considerable outlay of money for labor, catalogues, bulbs and promotions," he added.

"I have dedicated people here helping me, and they are doing a fine job," he added. "I only have time to start it, and they must carry on," he said.

Freedlander says he has had the fun of trying to get the project started and making it a good business. Right now he has plans which are almost ready, whereby, anyone in the community will be supplied with bulbs to plant, as per specifications, and can enjoy the blooms, and do as they please with them, all for the return of the bulbs in the winter. He also has in mind, a lease plan for those who might want to do it on a large-scale basis.

The flowers he grows have to be photographed so that people can order from the catalogue number and picture.

Many will come and visit the display here and some will choose the kind they would like to order for delivery, if everything works out next February to April.

The cut flowers are not sold, as a rule, because of transportation difficulties. This is true of all the dahlia growers [in this day in 1967]. The major purpose of course, is to grow the bulbs and take the photographs as a phase of making sales of bulbs.

Mr. Freedlander has accumulated his 375 varieties from around the world. He has some from Africa, Holland, Japan, Australia, and of course from all parts of this nation.

The successful growing formula used by Mr. Freedlander is what he terms as near as possible "foolproof." Most of the dahlias are planted in areas resembling a manicured lawn. A hole 18 inches across and 18 inches deep is dug, and the bulb planted five inches deep. The loose soil provides the necessary drainage. He uses cow manure or 5-10-10 commercial fertilizer and super-phosphate heavily. All his dahlias are staked to keep from breaking.

During the past week, the heavy rains hurt the flowers some, but not to a great degree.

Dahlias need the early morning mist and cool nights, and that is one of the reasons this area is ideal for their growth he believes.

Every stalk is marked, and they cannot be disturbed, and for that reason, he welcomes visitors to see the blooms, which can be enjoyed mostly from their cars, as they ride over the farm on paved roads.

Some of the South's largest newspapers are being invited to come and make pictures and get the story, since this is highest elevation dahlias are grown in the world in quantity and the largest staked display.

He is in the bulb business and not the bloom phase of the program. The bulbs will be shipped from here during January, February, and March.

This area in the mountains is considered by expert dahlia growers to be ideal from a soil and climate standpoint.

"We always expect to work closely with N. C. State University at Raleigh and the local Farm Agents who have been very helpful down through the years on everything we have grown," Freedlander said. Credit for whatever success we have attained to date belongs largely to Wayne Garrett and Miss Rufina Bright who have been with the place since it's inception many years ago. Also to Mrs. Perry Gibson who is just as natural with flowers of all kinds to produced outstanding results."

Freedlander's farm is not devoted exclusively to dahlias. There are over 400 blooming rose bushes on the farm, some 1,700 bearing chestnut trees. These are of the blight resistant variety. Also 6,000 balsams dot the farm.

While Freedlander likes roses, he is quick to advise, "be prepared to spend four times the energy and effort growing roses as any other flower—they take time."

From the time you enter the gates to the farm, cross a little stream, and see the cascading waterfall, on up into the dahlia area—along the road named "Dahlia Road" you will feel as if you have stepped into a fairyland.

Honestly, everything is for real, but you'll have to look twice to believe it.

Pictures featured in the article:

Freedlander's Dahlia Garden

THOUSANDS of dahlias are blooming on the A. L. Freedlander Estate at Grandview. The industrialist, who chairs Dayco's Board of Directors, has planted so many that Waynesville soon may be known as the dahlia capital of the world. His secretary, Miss Rufina Bright, displays one of the largest.

[Pictured is Miss Bright standing in the field of dahlias holding a large bloom!]

Dahlias And Freedlander Home At Grandview

--A hobby that is turning the Freedlander Estate into a rainbow of colors.

[Pictured is a dahlia plant with several blooms with a Grandview building in the background. There is also a picture of WAYNE GARRETT]

Blossoming At Grandview

THIS CLUSTER of dahlias is only one of several thousand blossoming on the A. L. Freedlander Estate at Grandview.

Unfortunately, the pictures did not copy very well