



**Fig No 18.**

The height of the bloom from the bottom of the vase needs to be twenty four inches at most shows but could vary according to the height of the staging. The aim is to get the blooms as close to eye-level as possible, and when staging three rows of giants they need to look as if there is three blooms on one stem when you stand back (Fig19.) You need to be able to see all the blooms individually, also that no bloom is covering another as in many examples in this book However, you can vary the height according to the size of your blooms. Small giants can be cut down two to three inches lower than the recommended height and they will appear larger, but this will be noted by the judges. The blooms in the whole exhibit need to be at an angle of 45 degrees.

## STAGING THE BLOOMS

Vases are supplied at most national shows and you need to ensure that they are clean and then filled with fresh clean water. A scrunched up ball of newspaper the size of a tennis ball is then placed in the vase and pressed to the bottom. /this will enable the bloom to be stable when packing with more newspaper is completed round the top of the vase ensuring that there is nothing above the top of the vase as this could be taken as support above the top of the vase which would be NAS'd by the judges.



**Fig No 19.**



**Fig No 20.**

The final touch is that all vases are labelled with the variety name and the exhibitor's entry card is placed with the name face down. At National shows a team of three to judge each class, and a special team of three judges who decide on the special awards, i.e. Best Bloom, Best Exhibit. National Dahlia Society approved judges have to pass a practical examination consists of judging seven different classifications of dahlias in a mini show arrangement. Candidates have to avoid incurring a certain amount of penalty points accrued from mistakes below the permitted allowed in order to pass. In all exhibit's of dahlia they are not only looking for size, but also shape, form, colour and freshness, also ensuring they conform to the show schedule.

This also applies when you exhibit five blooms in a vase, as seen in Fig.18, well demonstrated by June Davis, and each bloom is equally spaced. This also enables the judge to pass the ring over each bloom. This dose not occur in giants as there is no limit on the size. However bigger is not always better as a well balanced set will always have preference over an exhibit that is unbalanced, i.e .blooms of ten inches and ones of fifteen inches in the same exhibit. When staging giants the big blooms with good depth are placed on the back row and the smaller blooms on the front row, again giving an illusion that all blooms are of a similar size.



**Fig No 21.**



Even in an exhibit of giant decorative you can be disqualified, in more than one way, i.e. too many blooms in the exhibit which has happened when a spare vase had been left with the exhibit. A split cane left on a bloom contributes support above the top of the vase which is not allowed. Extra buds left on the stems, also means disqualification. Always read the schedule in order to be sure that you have the right number of cultivars as you will be disqualified if you do not conform to this, which has happened many times at the National show. With all these hurdles overcome and the Judges having made their decision, you could end up like myself by winning the top exhibit at a national show. Fig.21. At this busy time it is necessary to select your stock whilst cutting for the shows and label the plants of each variety which are superior to others. After the last show a feed of sulphate of potash should be applied to all plants at a good handful per square metre, ensuring that it does not come in contact with the foliage. This will help to ripen the tubers and will improve their keeping qualities. It is important to take the covers down as soon as possible after the shows, so as not to get a lot of soft growth on the plants. The dahlia produces a tuber in September and October and this then takes us full circle back to lifting the dahlias when frosted. There are always new dahlias each year to look forward to growing and eagerly awaiting the new seasons catalogues to look for a new diamond as Dave Spencer puts it.



**BRYN TERFEL THE NEW DIAMOND**

# SEEDLINGS RAISED BY ME AS AN AMATEUR



Charnwood Beauty Giant Semi - Cactus Dahlia





Leycester Giant Decorative - my second seedling