

Big Changes Coming for the Hosta Show Schedule

At its fall 2025 board meeting, the American Hosta Society's Board of Directors gave tentative approval to sweeping changes to the AHS official show schedule. These changes are not planned to go into effect until 2027, and full implementation is dependent on determining and approving any potential costs associated with them by the board. Also, the new schedule will need to be tested at select shows in 2026 to assure the board that there are no unforeseen consequences resulting from the changes.

The Georgia and Minnesota Hosta Societies volunteered and have been selected to pilot the new show schedule in 2026. This means we have work to do ahead of this year's show to prepare for the pilot and to educate our show committee, judges, and (most importantly) our exhibitors of what the changes are and what new procedures we will need to follow. We are excited to be a guinea pig for these changes since several of our GHS and MHS members were involved in the development of them. We think they will make the show schedule more logical and they will also simplify many aspects of the show.

The changes can be categorized into three main areas. They are as follows:

1. Reorganizing the present AHS Standard Hosta Show structure to make it more logical and more simple
2. Increasing the number of size sections from five to seven and rebalancing the size sections
3. Simplifying the color classes used for registered named cultivars

Shown below is a side-by-side comparison of the present Divisions I-III and the new proposed Divisions I-III. These are the only divisions affected. Other standard divisions, Division IV - Educational Exhibits, Division V - Non-competitive Exhibits, Division VI - Artistic Design entries and Division VII - Specialty Exhibits, are not affected by the changes.

Present Standard Show Schedule

DIVISION I – HORTICULTURE (Cut-leaf)

- Section I – Giant-Leaved Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section II – Large-Leaved Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section III – Medium-Leaved Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section IV – Small-Leaved Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section V – Miniature-Leaved Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section VI – Giant-Leaved Unregistered Seedlings and Sports
- Section VII – Large-Leaved Unregistered Seedlings and Sports
- Section VIII – Medium-Leaved Unregistered Seedlings and Sports
- Section IX – Small-Leaved Unregistered Seedlings and Sports
- Section X – Miniature-Leaved Unregistered Seedlings and Sports
- Section XI – Youth Exhibits of Registered Cultivars and Species
Displayed in Alphabetical Order
- Section XII – Unregistered Named Hosta Cultivars
Displayed in Alphabetical Order

Entries in Sections I-X are to be displayed using the following Color Classes:

- Class 1 – Green (All Shades)
- Class 2 – Blue (All Shades)
- Class 3 – Yellow (All Shades)
- Class 4 – White Margined
 - a. Yellow, White, or Chartreuse Center
 - b. Green to Blue Center
- Class 5 – Yellow Margined
 - a. Yellow, White, or Chartreuse Center
 - b. Green to Blue Center
- Class 6 – Green or Blue Margined
 - a. Yellow, White, or Chartreuse Center
 - b. Green to Blue Center (distinct from margin color)
- Class 7 – Streaked or Mottled
- Class 8 – Others (including early season variants)

DIVISION II – CONTAINER GROWN HOSTAS

DIVISION III – TROUGH/CONTAINER GARDENS ARRANGED FOR EFFECT

Proposed Standard Show Schedule

DIVISION I – Registered Cut Leaf Entries

- Section I – Giant Leaf Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section II – Large Leaf Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section III – Medium-Large Leaf Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section IV – Medium Leaf Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section V – Medium-Small Leaf Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section VI – Small Leaf Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section VII – Petite Leaf Registered Cultivars and Species
- Section VIII – Youth Exhibits of Registered Cultivars and Species
Displayed in Alphabetical Order

Entries in Division I, Sections I through VII are to be displayed using the following Color Classes:

- Class 1 – Green (All Shades)
- Class 2 – Blue (All Shades)
- Class 3 – Yellow (All Shades)
- Class 4 – Lighter Margin, Darker Center
- Class 5 – Darker Margin, Lighter Center
- Class 6 – Variable Colorations

DIVISION II – Unregistered Cut Leaf Entries

- Section I – Unregistered Seedlings and Sports
- Section II – Unregistered Named Hosta Cultivars
Displayed in Alphabetical Order

DIVISION III – Hosta Plants in Containers

- Section I – Container Grown Individual Hostas
- Section II – Trough/Container Gardens Arranged for Effect

Under the new show schedule structure:

Division I is now reserved for cut-leaf entries of named registered cultivars and species only. There will also now be seven size sections instead of five as well as the youth exhibits section in this division. Section winners will receive Best of Section awards. The Best of Show award is selected from section winners in this division. It is in this division where the most consequential changes to the show schedule occur.

The seven new size sections are based on the revised **Table of Leaf Sizes** that gives the square inch size range for each section. The leaf size of a registered cultivar is calculated by multiplying its registered leaf length by its width to get a square inch number for that hosta. The AHS Classification Committee uses that number to determine which size section the cultivar belongs to and adds that information to the Hosta Show Classification List that we use in entering leaves in our show. Exhibitors in Division I will not need to perform any measurements or calculations. **An entry's size section is based on its assignment in the Classification List**, not on the actual size of the leaf being entered. The addition of two size sections and the revision of the Table of Leaf Sizes to rebalance the number of cultivars in each section will fix the problem of having huge numbers of entries in just two sections, the old Sections III and IV, which contained around 60% of the total entries. With a more balanced number of leaves in each of the new sections, each leaf will also have a more equalized chance of making it to the head table.

Probably the most important change is in the revised and simplified color classes. The first three color classes – green, blue, and yellow - stay the same. The new Color Class 4 is for all variegated hostas with **lighter margins and darker centers** while Color Class 5 is for all hostas with **darker margins and lighter centers**. Color Class 6 includes all those hostas with variable colorations which do not fit anywhere else. Examples would be streaked and misted hostas, color changers, and odd-balls like *H. 'Zebra Stripes'*. The color class to which a registered hosta is assigned in the Classification List is based on its registered color description.

Remember, only cultivars and species listed in the Hosta Show Classification List may be entered in this division and the show section and class of a cultivar are determined by its classification in the Classification List.

Division II now groups all the unregistered cut-leaf entries in the show into this division containing two sections. **Section I** - ALL the unregistered unnamed seedling and sport entries will be entered in this one section (instead of the five sections for seedlings and sports under the old schedule). The Best Seedling or Sport award goes to the best entry scoring 95 points or better in this section. Research of several shows, including AHS National Convention shows indicated that there are very few seedlings and unnamed sports entered in any show, making the need for five size sections unnecessary. Combining these sections into one will simplify the show and reduce the amount of space on the head table that previously had to be reserved for five sections which often had no winners. **Section II** – This section will contain all entries of unregistered named cultivars. As under the old structure, the best entry in this section scoring 95 points or better receives a Best of Section award.

Division III now groups all hosta plants in containers together into this division containing two sections.

Section I is for all container-grown individual hosta entries and **Section II** is for all the trough/container garden entries. There are no rules changes for these two sections. As it was under the old schedule, the best entry scoring 95 points or better in each of these sections receives a Grand Award.

These changes are based in-part on the recommendations presented in the report of an AHS study committee charged with identifying possible needed show schedule changes and also on extensive research on those recommendations conducted by AHS Vice President – Judging and Exhibitions, Kathie Sisson. Kathie also received extensive input from our AHS Hosta Show Judges in a series of Clinic III exercises. The entire exercise was conducted in order to find ways to simplify present show procedures and to make it easier to conduct shows, to enter entries in shows, to place entries on the show tables and to judge the entries.

As already stated, there is much work to be done in preparation for our 2026 show. Kathie is already building a new interim Classification List for our use in the pilot show and she is also revising the various forms to be used in the pilot. Both of our show committees are developing the interim show schedule, revising show procedures to conform to the new schedule, and formulating plans to educate our members, judges, and clerks. Kathie is requesting feedback from all show participants regarding the effects of the changes to the show schedule (good or bad) before, during, and after the show. This feedback will be vitally important to the success of this reorganization.

Yes, we are indeed excited about having our show selected as a pilot location for the new schedule. There will be more information coming and at our meetings so stay tuned!

--Many thanks are due to Harold McDonell of the GA Hosta Society as he wrote 99.9% of this article for use in the GA Hosta Society Newsletter. Used with his permission.