

*Hosta* – Outline

1. BOTANY

- a. Plant Family: Asparagaceae (also sometimes placed in Liliaceae, Hostaceae, Agavaceae); huge family
- b. Scientific genus: *Hosta*;
- c. Includes more than 40 species of MONOCOT (define Monocot vs. Dicot) PERENNIAL (Define Perennial) HERBACEOUS (Define Herbaceous vs. Woody) plants.
- d. Plants grow from a crown, growing points on crowns are called “nodes”
- e. American Hosta Society registers and publishes hosta cultivars on their website. In fact, their judging manual (to be used as a guideline, as we must use NGC guidelines.)
- f. Leaf composed of **BLADE** (flat broad part) and **PETIOLE** (leaf stem.) Flowers are **SCAPES** – leafless stem.

2. CULTURE

- a. “Plant when the ground isn’t frozen.” Difficult to kill the plants, though spring and fall is best for transplanting
- b. Most hostas prefer shade.
- c. Some hostas, especially those with more “yellow” in the leaves, can tolerate sun.
- d. If hostas receive too much sun, they burn along the edges. White variegated plants tend to sun burn the fastest as they lack pigment in these areas.
- e. Too much shade may result in poor flowering (positive/negative), loss of variegation, poor clump development
- f. Water - Plants are heavy water-drinkers in the spring as new growth emerges; research is showing up to two inches per week as plants unfurling to develop typical sized leaves
- g. Fertilizer
  - i. Too much fertilizer can result in weak, floppy growth as plants try to grow in conditions (SHADE) where the sun restricts natural development; similar to fertilizing houseplants in the winter when light conditions are reduced; excess fertilizer can destroy variegation patterns.
  - ii. Not enough fertilizer can mean weak, floppy growth (as well), or limited growth of plants. Poor clump development.
- h. Mulch
  - i. Advantages: conserve soil moisture, reduce weeds, keeps ground cooler, adds organic matter to soil as decomposes
  - ii. Disadvantages: limited weed growth anyway in shade, can provide resting/hiding place for slugs (strong consideration)
- i. Propagation
  - i. Division – digging up clump in early spring or fall
  - ii. Seeds germinate readily. Most growers save seeds in refrigerator during winter, though no chilling period (STRATIFICATION) is needed.
- j. Pest
  - i. Insects and related Pests: slugs, cutter bees, Japanese beetles, millipedes, deer
  - ii. Diseases: wind tatters, cold injury, virus, bacterial leaf spot

3. Classification of types – Established by the American Hosta Society; information on website; free for downloading; GREAT REFERENCE

- a. Size
  - i. **Giant-leaved** Species and Varieties – 120 square inches or more (AHS) – NGC suggests over 8” across)
  - ii. **Large-leaved** Species and Varieties – 64 to 120 square inches (AHS); 6” up to 8 inches across NGC)
  - iii. **Medium-leaved** Species and Varieties – 30 to less than 64 square inches (AHS), 3 inches to 6 inches (NGC)
  - iv. **Small-Leaved** Species and Varieties – 6 to 30 square inches (AHS), less than 3” across (NGC)
  - v. **Miniature-Leaved** Species and Varieties – less than 6 square inches (AHS); this is a size division from AHS; NGC lumps small and miniature together, though they could easily be separated at a Standard Flower Show
  - vi. NGC is a SUGGESTED classification.
  - vii. **IMPORTANT: If exhibiting in size class, leaf must be a mature specimen;** it would be helpful to judges to have AHS classification to determine if leaf is mature form or immature form; Classifications can be downloaded from American Hosta Society website
  
- b. Color
  - i. Green (all shades)
  - ii. Blue (all shades)
  - iii. Yellow (all shades)
  - iv. White Margined
    - i. Yellow, white or chartreuse center
    - ii. Green to blue center
  - v. Yellow Margined
    - i. Yellow, white or chartreuse center
    - ii. Green to blue center
  - vi. Green or Blue Margined
    - i. Yellow, white or chartreuse center
    - ii. Green to Blue center (distinct from margin color)
  - vii. Streaked or Mottled
  - viii. Others (including early season variants) – ‘June’
- c. In large shows, may include size classification, and then subdivided into color classification

#### 4. Writing a Class for Hosta

- a. Cut or container-grown; schedule dictates via Top Exhibitor Award
- b. One leaf exhibited only, no matter size
- c. Blooms could be shown in “Flowering Perennial Class”
- d. Possible classes
  - i. By Leaf Size (diameter across)
  - ii. By Leaf Color
  - iii. Variants, seedlings
  - iv. Specific cultivars, related cultivars
 (Class unto itself, subdivided by type, form, color and/or size)
- e. Possibly eligible for:
  - i. Award of Merit
  - ii. Elfin Award (petite Hosta in a non-Petite Flower Show)

- iii. Grower's Choice Award(for container grown specimen)
- iv. Collector's Showcase Award(collections/displays)
- v. Award of Horticultural Excellence

## 5. Preparing for Exhibit

- a. Cuttings
  - i. Cut several specimens; better to cut long and re-cut before the show
  - ii. **Conditioning in warm (baby-bath) temperature water to keep hydrated.**
  - iii. Make sure butt end has clean cut and isn't torn from plant (Grooming!)
  - iv. Clean debris from leaves carefully; use shaving soap brush and soft cloth; look under the leaves and on the stem.
- b. Check plant carefully for signs of insects and related pests.
- c. Research name; include genus, species, variety and cultivar.
- d. Pack plant carefully to avoid damaging leaves and/or stems.

## 6. JUDGING CONSIDERATIONS

THINK: How would you describe the specimen and the characteristics to a blind person?

**CONFORMANCE** (5 pts.) – does the exhibit conform to the requirements listed in the schedule/class description.

THIS IS AN ALL-OR-NOTHING thing. You either give all 5 points or deduct all 5 points. Chances are if something is wrong here, it will also be wrong somewhere else.

- i. Favorable: requirements met; schedule is followed, # leaves/flowers/etc. per schedule; one leaf as required
- ii. Unfavorable: does not meet schedule specifications; incorrect number of leaves per schedule; requirements are not met.

**PLANT IDENTIFICATION** (5 pts.) – Legible; identified with genus and cultivars on all but the species as most specimens are cultivars.

Plants also CANNOT receive NGC Top Exhibitor Section or Division awards without complete name. For perfect specimens without correct and/or complete name, this may be difficult. However, the HB is emphatic on the issue. There is no leeway.

- i. Favorable: legible; easy to read, complete scientific name, accurate, properly labeled
- ii. Unfavorable: incomplete name; illegible; incorrect name, inaccurate, incomplete; not underlined

### **PEAK OF PERFECTION** (75 pts. total)

**FORM** (20 pts.) – 3-D shape of leaf AND stem. Do not penalize one for the form of another. **STUDY.** MOST but not all cut specimens should be symmetrical bilaterally,

meaning equal if divided in half. Ideally, the vein count on both sides of the mid rib should be the same number. Some hostas may exhibit a twisted form from the leaf tip to the cut end of the stem. The twist/contortion should still be bilaterally symmetrical.

Some leaves are ruffled or curled along the leaf margins. Look for uniformity in leaf form. Notice if grooming creates unevenly margined leaves. These faults will affect symmetry.

**Waffling** (compressed pattern resembling seer-suckering/waffle-like), if present) should be uniform on both halves of the leaves. Look at the waffling and puckering to make sure all facing the same way, up or down (in/out). **Zippering** (irregular puckering/creasing) is major fault.

Improper/poor trimming of leaf margins may affect the form. Trimming should almost be non-evident. This is ALSO Grooming.

If plant is exhibited as a container-grown specimen, is the specimen symmetrical/rounded? It should be a circular form when viewed from the top and somewhat domed when viewed from the side.

Is the stem correct length/proportional for the foliage? Is the stem straight? Undamaged/unblemished? Is the bloom present? Stems should be straight.

Comment on BLADE and STEM.

- i. Favorable: Balanced, uniform, symmetrical, flat/ruffled/curled/lobed; stem: strong, STOUT, sturdy, well-formed, stems erect, twisted, gracefully arched
- ii. Unfavorable: Unbalanced, irregular, asymmetrical, misshaped, open, gaps, uneven leaf margins; stem: short, twisted, thin, crooked, limp; bloom missing; inconsistent coloration

**Color** (20 pts.) – With variegated forms, the pattern should be consistent, remembering bilateral symmetry. Older leaves may not be as noticeably patterned as new leaves but should show evidence of color differences. UNIFORMITY is crucial.

Realize that newer colors may be more intense than more mature leaves. Newer leaves can be lighter or darker than mature leaves. Bloom/blue tends to weaken with moisture and heat, with fall leaves exhibiting more green than blue.

Look for evidence of too much sun with browning along the edges. These can be trimmed (grooming) but should not be evident.

- i. Favorable: pure, clear, bright, consistent, fresh, rich, clean, intense, uniform markings, true to variety, pleasing variegation, uniform
- ii. Unfavorable: dull, weak, streaked, discolored, excessively/noticeably not uniform, murky, lacks consistency

**Maturity/Size** (20 pts.) – refers to maturity of leaf, fully mature with proper vein count. Leaves will be more mature as the season progresses. Plants seldom reach maturity until 3+ years in the garden.

- i. Favorable: vigorous, mature, full, fully developed, specific size of leaf blade (length/width) and stem length must be listed with favorable adjective
- ii. Unfavorable: immature, young, tiny, lacks overall vigor, indications of poor culture, poorly formed; specific size of leaf blade (length/width) and stem length must be listed with favorable adjective

**Condition** (15 pts.) Plant's overall health. No mechanical injury (torn leaves, crushed stems/leaves), no diseases or insects present/evident. Look for torn leaves and deduct appropriate points. However, consider quantity of injury to overall specimen. Look for plant *substance* (firmness of tissue); leaf margins will discolor when wilting.

- i. Favorable: undamaged, prime, pristine, clean, fresh, peak condition overall, turgid, hydrated
- ii. Unfavorable: torn, split, scarred, spotted, edges of leaves dry, dried margins, water spotting, residue from water/sprays, evidence of insects and diseases, wilting, leaf edges browning, curling of leaf edges

### **GROOMING/STAGING** (15 pts. total)

**Grooming** (10 pts.) – strictly under exhibitor control. Look for evidence of dirty leaves on the top and bottom, torn butt end instead of cut, debris on stems/leaves in the petiole. Is trimming unobtrusive?

- i. Favorable: well-groomed, clean (if potted, soil, foliage), scars unnoticeable,
- ii. Unfavorable: dirty, scars evident, foreign matter on plant, spray residue evident, artificially polished (Leaf-shine), unattractive/inconsistent leaf trimming, obvious grooming, stubs present.

**Staging** (5 pts.) – Cleanliness of container/pot comes into play a container/pot should be subservient to the plant. If staged in a bottle, does specimen indicate typical growth habit favorably? Is overall length of specimen proportional (not too large, not too small) for container/bottle/vase? Is the plant wedged properly/improperly? Would wedging (the use of a material to support the specimen in the container to improve presentation), if absent but allowed, improve specimen?

- i. Favorable: clean, plant proportioned to pot, centered in vase; for cut specimens: pleasing pose; wedged (cut specimen) properly
- ii. Unfavorable: container too large or too small for specimen, pot dirty, salt residue on pot, double potting evident, container distracts from exhibit, lopsided in pot, off-center; leaning; improperly wedged (or not wedged at all for best display)