

New England Hosta Society



A Guide to Hosta

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The New England Hosta Society (NEHS) has put together this handbook on the genus Hosta. It is packed with useful information to help you learn more about growing our favorite plant - hosta.

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Hosta Organizations and Resources

New England Hosta Society: <http://www.nehosta.org/>

This is the non-profit educational organization that created this booklet. The website contains an overview of the society, membership information, calendar of events including members-only garden tours, pictures of hosta, local hosta specialty nurseries and meetings.

American Hosta Society: <https://www.americanhostasociety.org/>

The American Hosta Society is an international, not-for-profit, educational, scientific society formed to foster and promote knowledge and interest in the genus *Hosta* through education and outreach, to encourage the introduction and development of new and improved varieties of hostas into cultivation, and to promote the registration of new cultivars in their role as the ICRA (International Cultivar Registration Authority) for the genus *Hosta*.

The website contains information on who they are, how to join, information on the history of hosta, evolution, growth habits, cultivation and more.

Subscribe to the free AHS eNewsletter by completing the form on the Publications page (select Resources > Publications from the menu). Also, on the Publications you will find the link to the online archive of past eNewsletters and information about *The Hosta Journal*.

Hosta Organizations & Resources (Continued)

Hosta Library: <https://www.hostalibrary.org/>

The Hosta Library is the largest and most comprehensive information resource for the Genus Hosta. It features photos of thousands of hosta cultivars and much other information. Photos are submitted by numerous contributors and generally are accurate representations of the cultivar. The Hosta Library is a resource free for all to use.

Rawson's Hosta Lists: <http://www.hostalists.org/>

The Hosta Lists are 100 individual lists which group hosta cultivars and species according to various characteristics. These lists have been compiled by Donald Rawson over a seventeen-year period and are updated annually. Containing over 21,000 entries, this is the most complete and accurate collection of lists available. Hosta names are faithfully and carefully checked for accuracy against the *Hosta Registry* and *The Hostapedia: An Encyclopedia of Hostas* (Mark R. Zilis, 2009).

Delaware Valley Hosta Society <https://www.delvalhosta.org/>

The Delaware Valley Hosta Society's web site has information on growing Hosta on the "About Hosta" dropdown. The "FAQ's Part I" on the "About Hosta" dropdown has answers to some Frequently Asked Questions about Hosta.

For a discussion of hosta, listed by various plant characteristics such as color, size, type of variegation, and other attributes, see Chapter 6 in *The Genus Hosta* (W. George Schmid, 1991).

Anatomy of the Genus Hosta

The following are some basic anatomical terms used to describe Hosta. These definitions were taken from the AHS and Hosta Library websites (dictionary and glossary pages).

Source: <https://www.americanhostasociety.org/> and <https://hostalibrary.org>

Letters in () refer to those listed in *Figure 1 Hosta Anatomy* (drawn by Judith Artley).

(A) CROWN – the base of a plant where the roots and *shoots* join.

SHOOT – the *stem* and set of *leaves* of an individual *division*; the dormant set of leaves all enclosed in a single set of leaf scales.

DIVISION – (in Hosta) a single shoot with roots attached

(B) LEAF- consists of two distinct parts. The *petiole* and *leaf blade*.

(C) PETIOLE - Leaf stalk. Typically green, but being hybridized to achieve different colors, such as red, purple, violet, maroon red, reddish purple and rich red.

(D) LEAF BLADE- the thin, usually flat part of leaf excluding the petiole.

Leaf Blade Size (Note: Square inches = leaf length X leaf width)

- **Giant** Greater than 120 Square inches
- **Large** 64 to < 129 Square inches
- **Medium** 30 to < 64 Square inches
- **Small** 6 to < 30 Square inches
- **Miniature** < 6 square inches

(E) **FLOWER STEM** - the main stem of the *inflorescence*; peduncle.

(F) **SCAPE or STEM** - the stem bearing the complete set of flowers for a single division. In *hosta*, same as flower stem and peduncle.

(G) **INFLORESCENCE** - the flowering part of a *hosta* includes the *raceme*, *peduncle*, *pedicel*, and *flower*.

RACEME - inflorescence with flowers attached individually to a main stem by *pedicels*. *Hosta* flowers are arranged as racemes.

(E) **PEDUNCLE** - the main stem of the inflorescence; flower stem.

(H) **PEDICEL** - the structure attaching an individual flower to the flower stem.

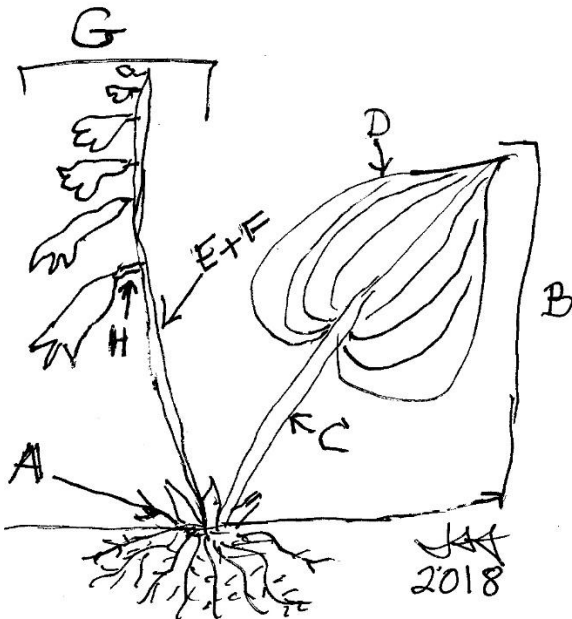


Figure 1 *Hosta* Anatomy (drawn by Judith Artley)

LEAF CHARACTERISTICS include the following:

Refer to https://hostaregistrar.org/hosta_terminology.html, Hosta Registry, Definition of Terms, for a detailed description of terms.

Color:

- Solid Green, Blue or Yellow. (All shades) **Note:** Blue Hosta have a waxy coating on their leaf surface, creating the intense early blue color and sometimes a misty color. As the season progresses, the wax washes off resulting in the leaf color changes to become muted or blue-green.
- Variegated leaf having more than one color due to a difference in pigment components as margined, medio-variegated, splashed, misted, or mottled
- Medio-Variegated leaf or leaves having a lighter center than the margin color
- Splashed having a variegation pattern that has many non-connected light and dark variegated sections usually in streaks running nearly parallel to the midrib
- Misted having small short segments of dark pigmented tissue on a lighter background
- Mottled blotched spotting of leaf blade

Shape: Leaf shapes can be Lance, Elliptic, Ovate, Broadly Ovate or Nearly Round.

Margin Appearance (the edge of leaf blade): The margin can be Flat, Slightly Rippled, Heavily Rippled, or Serrated.

Leaf Blade: Leaf can be Flat, Cupped, Twisted, Folded, Wavy or Corrugated.

ORIGINATOR STOCK - This term is abbreviated as OS or O.S. in catalogs and other Hosta literature. It means the division or plant comes from the originator's plant and not from Tissue Culture (TC).

TISSUE CULTURE - The process of growing plant fragments within nutrient medium to create clones of original plant. Replication of plants in a laboratory.

SPORT - A sport is a mutation produced vegetatively by a single plant that is different from the parent plant (no seeds involved). In Hostas, this usually is a leaf color or pattern variation, although flower, scape, and even root differences on a new division would also be considered sports. Basically, your plain old green plant suddenly grows a leaf or sends out a new division with, for example, a white edge.

REVERSION - A reversion is when the plant reverts back to the parents' form. Your variegated plant suddenly produces an eye with solid green leaves. To find the lineage of a hosta, go to the Hosta Library homepage, <https://www.hostalibrary.org/>, and select the MYHOSTAS.BE button. This brings up search, where you enter the hosta and it will show its parents and the sports that have come from it.

MATURE PLANT SIZES:

- **Miniature:** Leaf area from 2 to 6 square inches. Foliage height from 4 to 6 inches.
- **Small:** Leaf area from 6 to 25 square inches. Foliage height 6 to 10 inches.
- **Medium:** Leaf area from 25 to 81 square inches. Foliage height 10 to 18 inches.
- **Large:** Leaf size greater than 81 square inches up to 144 square inches. Foliage height 18 inches to 28 inches.
- **Giant:** Leaf size greater than 144 square inches and foliage height greater than 28 inches.

Hosta Cultivation

Where to plant

- Hosta are 'shade tolerant' and grow well in sunnier spots. The best sites have morning or late afternoon sun.
- Gold or yellow hosta benefit from more sun exposure which brings out their Yellow/Gold color.
- Blue hosta retain their 'blue' coloring longer with more shade.

When to Plant

- Early spring when eye is visible or late summer into early Fall.
- Avoid planting during the hot summer. If you must plant hosta in the summer, keep well-watered.

What kind of Soil

Hosta are adaptable and grow in average garden soil. To have them growing their best:

- Optimum pH of neutral to slightly acidic
- Amend soil with organic matter (peat/compost/leaf mold).
- Loose, well-drained soil.
- If planting under shallow rooted trees, such as maple, you may want to plant in a raised bed. Refer to Mark Zilis' *List of Hosta-compatible Trees, Shrubs and Vines* on the [Resources page](#) of our website.

How to Plant

- Provide ample room for the plant to grow into. Space plants based on the expected mature clump size of the cultivar.
- Plant crown (where stems & roots meet) level with soil surface.
- Water deeply to promote deep roots.
- Mulch to help with water retention and keep the roots cool

The Delaware Hosta Society website has more information on Growing Hosta. <https://www.delvalhosta.org/>

Propagation by Division

For the most part, there is no requirement to divide a clump of hosta. However, you should divide if you notice:

- Parts of the clump have developed ‘sports’ or reversion. Mutations that don’t look like the mother plant.
- When the center has died back and live plant is growing around the perimeter of the crown, known as a ‘fairy ring’.
- It has outgrown its space and is crowding other plants
- You want to make several smaller plants to share or use in other places.

What is the best time of year to split hosta?

Early spring or late summer into early fall are the preferred times of year to divide hosta.

Regardless of what method you use it is important to have the proper tools and to sterilize them before use. A quick way to sterilize is to create a 10% bleach solution (1-part bleach to 10 parts water). Soak tools for a few minutes. Tools that can be used are garden fork, pointed shovel, transplant shovel, to dig around the perimeter of the clump. A serrated knife can be used to cut through the clump.

See below for more detailed methods of dividing a clump.

The Hosta Library website has illustrated methods of Hosta Division for Spring and Fall. To access, go to the Hosta Library homepage, <https://www.hostalibrary.org/> and click “DIVIDING” button.

Richard Merritt, owner of New Hampshire Hosta and member of NEHS, produced an excellent YouTube video demonstrating *How to Divide & Propagate Hosta*. He also talks about spring and fall propagation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cifp6pNaeWo>

Where to Purchase Hosta in New England

This is a list of hosta specialty nurseries that are members of the New England Hosta Society and support its mission. **Call or email before visiting** to determine visiting hours.

Connecticut

O'Brien Nursery - Owner: John O'Brien
40 Wells Road, Granby CT 06035
<https://www.obriehosta.com/>, Phone: (860) 653-0163

Massachusetts

Cochato Nursery - Owners: Chuck Doughty
373 N. Frank Street, Holbrook, MA
<https://www.cochatonursery.com/>, Phone: (781)767-9770

Driftwood Gardens - Owner: Dan Pessoni
4 Driftwood Lane, East Orleans, Cape Cod, MA, 02643
E-mail: danthelilyman@aol.com, Phone: (508) 255-9348

Enchanted Gardens - Joan Butler, Holliston, MA
PO Box 6433, Holliston, MA 01746
<https://www.enchantedgardensdesign.com/>, Phone: (508) 494-8768

Greene Acres - Owners: Steve & Ruth Greene
36 Elaine Road, Sudbury, MA 01776
E-mail: shgreene@aol.com

Greywood Farm - Owner: Darlyn Wilkinson,
85 River Road., Topsfield, MA 01983
<http://greywoodfarm.squarespace.com/>
E-mail: Greywoodfarm@comcast.net

Where to Purchase Hosta in New England

(Continued)

The Hosta Farm of Mendon - Owners: Rip & Ginger Sokol

52 Bates St., Mendon, MA 01756

<https://www.facebook.com/HostaFarm/>

Phone: (508) 634-1914

NOTE: They open their doors to retail sales a few times a year. Check events pages for dates and times on their Facebook page.

New Hampshire

Harmon Hill Farm – Owners: Carl & Marlene Harmon

49 Ledge Road, Hudson, NH

<https://harmonhillfarm.com/>, Phone: (603) 880-6228

HostaAmour - Owners: Cheryl & Rick Cravino

3 Mercury Lane, Pelham, NH

<https://hostaamour.net/>, Phone: (603) 635-3938

Mason Hollow Nursery - Owners: Chuck & Sue Andersen

47 Scripps Lane, Mason, NH.

<https://www.masonhollow.com/>, Phone: (603) 878-4347

New Hampshire Hostas - Owner: Richard Merritt

73 Exeter Rd., South Hampton, NH

<https://www.nhhostas.com/>, Phone: (603) 879-0085

Hosta of the Year

The [American Hosta Growers Association](#) established the AHGA Hosta of the Year in 1996. It is selected by a vote of AHGA members. Award winners are hostas that are good garden plants in all regions of the country, that are widely available and in good supply.

2026 - H. 'Halcyon'	2011 - H. 'Praying Hands'
2025 - H. 'Skywriter'	2010 - H. 'First Frost'
2024 - H. 'Mini Skirt'	2009 - H. 'Earth Angel'
2023 - H. 'Neptune'	2008 - H. 'Blue Mouse Ears'
2022 - H. 'Island Breeze'	2007 - H. 'Paradigm'
2021 - H. 'Rainbow's End'	2006 - H. 'Stained Glass'
2020 - H. 'Dancing Queen'	2005 - H. 'Striptease'
2019 - H. 'Lakeside Paisley Print'	2004 - H. 'Sum & Substance'
2018 - H. 'World Cup'	2003 - H. 'Regal Splendor'
2017 - H. 'Brother Stefan'	2002 - H. 'Guacamole'
2016 - H. 'Curly Fries'	2001 - H. 'June'
2015 - H. 'Victory'	2000 - H. 'Sagae'
2014 - H. 'Abiqua Drinking Gourd'	1999 - H. 'Paul's Glory'
2013 - H. 'Rainforest Sunrise'	1998 - H. 'Fragrant Bouquet'
2012 - H. 'Liberty'	1997 - H. 'Patriot'
	1996 - H. 'So Sweet'

American Hosta Society Popularity Poll

This is the list of the most popular Hosta, voted by the members of the American Hosta Society. If you are new to Hosta, consider this list of plants to start your collection. The complete poll results are on the [American Hosta Society](#) website, Resources > Popularity Poll.

Medium to Large Hostas Popularity Poll – 2023

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. H. 'Lakeside Paisley Print' | 11. H. 'Coast to Coast' |
| 2. H. 'June'* | 12. H. 'Halcyon'* |
| 3. H. 'Liberty' | 13. H. 'Earth Angel' |
| 4. H. 'Guardian Angel' | 14. H. 'Key West' |
| 5. H. 'Sagae'* | 15. H. 'Rainbow's End'* |
| 6. H. 'Sum and Substance'* | 16. H. 'Paradigm' |
| 7. H. 'Goodness Gracious' | 17. H. 'Spilt Milk' |
| 8. H. 'Brother Stefan' | 18. H. 'Victory'* |
| 9. H. <i>montana</i>
'Aureomarginata' | 19. H. 'Smash Hit' |
| 10. H. 'Blue Angel'* | 20. H. 'Gold Standard'* |

Miniature Hostas Popularity Poll – 2023

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. H. 'Blue Mouse Ears'* | 6. H. 'Tiny Tears' |
| 2. H. 'Mini Skirt' | 7. H. 'Mighty Mouse' |
| 3. H. 'Pandora's Box' | 8. H. 'School Mouse' |
| 4. H. 'Munchkin Fire' | 9. H. 'Dragon Tails' |
| 5. H. 'Cameo' | 10. H. 'Frosted Mouse Ears' |

* winners of the Benedict Garden Performance Medal. The Benedict Medal is the highest garden performance award offered by the American Hosta Society. The award is named in honor of Dr. Herb Benedict, a pioneer in hosta hybridizing.

Join or renew your NEHS membership today!



New England
Hosta Society

Complete the form and return it and your check (payable to NEHS) to:
Treasurer Lauren Patric, 1007 Tinkham Road, Wilbraham, MA 01095

NEHS membership is based on the calendar year (January 1-December 31)

Select your membership:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal 1-year \$10.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family* 1-year \$15.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal 3-year \$25.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family* 3-year \$40.00 |

This is a gift membership, given by _____
(shared with the recipient)

**A family membership is for 2 people from the same household.*

Name _____

Second name _____
(for Family Membership)

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone(1) _____ Email (1) _____

Phone(2) _____ Email (2) _____
(Family)

May we share your name, address and email with other NEHS members?

- Yes No *(Your personal information will never be shared, rented or sold for commercial or promotional purposes.)*

Signature member 1

Date signed

Signature member 2 (required with family membership)

Date signed

WHO WE ARE

The New England Hosta Society (NEHS) is one of many specialty horticulture societies that are scattered across the United States. Members are people who are passionate about hosta. Society members grow and promote hosta because of their ease of care, variety and beauty. Hosta leaves add texture and contrast to floral arrangements. Mini-hosta work well in fairy gardens. Some cultivars of hosta do well in outdoor containers. Savor spring by steaming the young shoots (like asparagus), and by adding leaves to salads and soups.

Members get access to quarterly email newsletters, summer picnics in private gardens, and members-only plant auctions. Meetings are held at the Northborough Historical Society, 52 Main Street, Northborough, MA. Meetings feature guest speakers of national, regional or local acclaim on hosta. Red and Blue Cup drawings, contests, good food, and fun as well as society business are part of the meetings.

We'd love to have you join NEHS. It is simple to do: fill out the membership form inside the back cover of this booklet and mail it, along with a check for the dues, to the address listed on the form, or come to a meeting and sign up in person. You may also give the gift membership to a gardener—or a potential gardener—in your life.



**New England
Hosta Society**

CONTACT US

Email: info@nehosta.org

Website: www.nehosta.org

Facebook: facebook.com/NEHosta