

**The American Hosta Society**  
**THE BENEDICT GARDEN PERFORMANCE AWARDS PLAN**  
**Recognizing Excellence in Garden Performance**  
**The Benedict Medal**

by **Meg Dalton, Middle Grove, NY**

The Benedict Garden Performance Awards Plan has been designed to recognize hostas that demonstrate superior garden performance – garden worthy plants that have passed the test of time, that exhibit cultural superiority, and that can be appreciated in the landscape both from a distance and under close observation. The system provides for three levels of awards. The cultivars to receive the awards are determined by a group of appointed judges known as AHS Garden Performance Judges. AHS Garden Performance Judges are selected from applicants based on their demonstrated knowledge of hostas and their demonstrated ability to visit a representative cross section of gardens in their region. This is important since garden performance awards are based on a cultivar's garden performance in the individual judge's region.

A maximum of 15% of the AHS membership in each region may be appointed Garden Performance Judges. To be appointed a Garden Performance Judge, the applicant must also have been a member of AHS for a minimum of three years. While the system may at first seem complicated, it is really quite simple. When the originator, registrant or hybridizer of a cultivar determines that his or her cultivar has sufficient distribution across the regions of AHS so that a large number of judges will be able to see it actually performing in gardens, he or she may then decide to nominate the hosta cultivar for consideration for the Benedict Garden Performance Awards. Please note that the cultivar must have been registered for at least three years in order to be considered for these awards. The originator may nominate as many as seven cultivars each year and nominations will be due in to the Garden Performance Awards Chair by February 15 of each year. The Board of Directors of AHS may also nominate seven cultivars each year. The cultivars nominated each year then become eligible to receive the Benedict Garden Performance Awards as provided by the rules of the system.

The **Honorable Mention Award (HM)** is the first award that a newly nominated cultivar becomes eligible to receive. Once nominated, a cultivar goes on the Honorable Mention ballot and remains eligible to receive this award for five years. If during this five year period, it does not win an HM Award, it is removed from the ballot. In order to win, it must receive votes from judges from at least two regions. A maximum of 15 Honorable Mention Awards may be awarded each year. If a cultivar does win an HM Award, it is then becomes eligible for the next tier of awards, the Award of Merit (AM).

All HM Award winners are automatically added to the **Award of Merit** ballot and remain eligible to receive this award for three years. In order to receive this award, the cultivar must receive votes from judges in at least three of the AHS regions. A maximum of ten hostas may receive the AM award each year.

The top Benedict Garden Performance Award is the **Benedict Medal**. This award is named in honor of Dr. Ralph Benedict, one of the great pioneers of improving the genus hosta through hybridization, a long time promoter of hostas as the premier shade perennial and strong supporter of The American Hosta Society. For a hosta to receive this prestigious award, it must truly be an outstanding garden performer across the country as evidenced by it having already received both the HM and the AM awards. Once a cultivar has received an AM award, it is added to the ballot for the Benedict Medal and remains eligible for the Medal for three years. Only one hosta will receive the Benedict Medal each year.

The entire plan, as approved by the Board of Directors is included in the Handbook for Judges and Exhibitors. Also included in the Handbook is a standard application form for Garden Performance Judges.

The first Honorable Mention Awards were presented at the National Convention in 2006. Each year the plan will be further implemented until 2009 when the first Benedict Medal will be awarded at the National Convention.

**The American Hosta Society**  
**BENEDICT GARDEN PERFORMANCE AWARDS PLAN**  
**Recognizing Excellence in Garden Performance**

## **Purpose of the Benedict Garden Performance Awards Plan**

The Benedict Garden Performance Award Plan, which was established in 2003 by The American Hosta Society, is designed to recognize hostas that demonstrate superior garden performance – garden worthy plants that have passed the test of time, that exhibit cultural superiority, and that can be appreciated in the landscape both from a distance and under close observation. These awards are named in honor of the late Dr. Ralph H. (Herb) Benedict, one of the great pioneers of improving the genus *Hosta* through hybridization, a long time promoter of hostas as the premier shade perennial and a strong supporter of The American Hosta Society.

The system provides for three levels of awards and winners of the awards are determined by the vote of AHS Garden Judges. The awards are presented annually at the National Convention to the originator or registrant of the winning cultivars. **The awards are limited to registered cultivars only.** To be considered for a Benedict Garden Performance Award, a cultivar must have been registered for at least three years.

## **Benedict Garden Performance Awards**

The American Hosta Society sponsors the following three tiers of Benedict Garden Performance Awards:

- The **Benedict Garden Performance Honorable Mention Award** is a certificate designed and presented by the American Hosta Society.
- The **Benedict Garden Performance Award of Merit** is a certificate designed and presented by the American Hosta Society.
- The **Benedict Garden Performance Medal** is a certificate and medal, designed and presented by the American Hosta Society.

### **The Awards System**

While the system may at first seem complicated, it is really quite simple. When the originator/hybridizer or registrant of a cultivar determines that his or her cultivar has sufficient distribution across the regions of AHS so that a large number of judges will be able to see it actually performing in gardens, he or she may then decide to nominate the hosta cultivar for consideration for Garden Performance Awards. Please note that the cultivar must have been registered for at least three years in order to be considered for these awards.

The originator/hybridizer or registrant may nominate as many as seven cultivars each year and nominations will be due in to the Garden Performance Award Chair(man) by February 15 of each year. The Board of Directors of AHS may also nominate seven cultivars each year at its annual Fall Board meeting. The cultivars nominated each year then become eligible to receive the Garden Performance Awards as provided by the rules of the system.

The **Benedict Garden Performance Honorable Mention Award** (HM) is the first award that a newly nominated cultivar becomes eligible to receive. Once nominated, a cultivar goes on the Benedict Garden Performance Honorable Mention ballot and remains eligible to receive this award for five years. If during this five-year period, it does not win an HM Award, it is removed from the ballot. In order to win, it must receive a minimum of 10 votes from judges from at least two regions. A maximum of 15 HM awards may be awarded each year to the cultivars receiving the most votes. In case of a tie for the final spot, all tied cultivars will receive the award. If a cultivar wins an HM award, it is then becomes eligible for the next tier of awards, the Benedict Garden Performance Award of Merit (AM).

All HM award winners are automatically added to the **Benedict Garden Performance Award of Merit** ballot and remain eligible to receive this award for three years. In order to receive this award, the cultivar must receive a minimum of 10 votes from judges in at least three of the AHS regions. A maximum of 10 AM awards may be awarded each year to the cultivars receiving the most votes. In case of a tie for the final spot, all tied cultivars will receive the award.

The top garden performance award is the **Benedict Garden Performance Medal**. For a hosta to receive this prestigious award, it must truly be an outstanding garden performer across the country as evidenced by it having already received both the HM and the AM awards. Once a cultivar has received an AM award, it is added to the ballot for the Benedict Garden Performance Medal and remains eligible for the medal for three years. One hosta will receive the Benedict Medal each year. In case of a tie for the final spot, all tied cultivars will receive the award.

## Procedures for Nomination of Cultivars

The following rules and procedures apply to nominations for these awards:

- 1. The hosta cultivar must have been registered for at least three years prior to the year of nomination.** Under this rule, nominations made by February 15, 2005 for inclusion on the 2005 ballot must be for cultivars registered in 2002 or earlier. A hosta cultivar is to be considered registered on the date of approval of the registration by the Registrar.
- 2. Only the originator/hybridizer or registrant (as indicated in the registration data), or the Board of Directors may nominate a cultivar.** The Board of Directors will only nominate cultivars whose originator and registrant are deceased.
- 3. Each originator/hybridizer or registrant may nominate a maximum of seven cultivars each year.**
- 4. The originator or registrant must submit nominations in writing to the Garden Performance Chair by no later than February 15 of each year (date of postmark) for inclusion on that year's ballot.** The Benedict Garden Performance Awards Nomination Form in this section of the Handbook may be reproduced and used to list nominations or the originator may provide the information, complete and legible, in letter form. The nomination should list the name of the cultivar and the year of registration. The Garden Performance Chair will acknowledge all nominations within three weeks of receipt. The Chair should be contacted immediately for any nominations not acknowledged within three weeks.
- 5. The Board of Directors will make nominations at its Fall Board meeting for inclusion on the next year's ballot.** The Board may nominate a maximum of seven cultivars each year. The Vice President – Judging and Exhibitions of AHS will then provide the list of nominations in writing to the Garden Performance Chair no later than two weeks following the conclusion of the National Convention.
- 6. A hosta cultivar can be nominated only once for Benedict Garden Performance awards.**

In determining if and when to place a hosta cultivar in nomination for Benedict Garden Performance awards, the originator and the Board of Directors should take into account the distribution of the hosta, how widespread it is grown, as well as the quality of the cultivar. Distribution is very important since garden judges will be located throughout the country and can only vote for hostas they have seen growing in their own regions and at National Convention gardens. A hosta that is not widely grown is not likely to receive enough votes for an award regardless of its quality. This makes timing of the nomination critical and cultivars should not be nominated before they are well distributed. Remember that a cultivar can only be nominated once for Garden Performance Awards.

# **Garden Judges' Requirements and Procedures**

## **Garden Judge Qualifications**

In order to become an AHS Garden Judge, a person must have the following qualifications:

1. Must be a member of The American Hosta Society for a minimum of three years.
2. Must have an extensive demonstrated knowledge of hostas.
3. Must have a demonstrated ability to visit a representative cross-section of gardens in his or her Region.

To apply to become a garden judge, complete the Garden Judge Application Form and send it to the Garden Performance Chair. Appointments are for five year terms. Garden judges may serve unlimited multiple terms provided they meet the requirements stated above and reapply at the end of each term. The Garden Performance Chair will be the final authority on all appointments for AHS Garden Judge.

## **Limitation of Number of Garden Judges per Region**

The number of garden judges is limited by region. No more than 15% of any Region's members may serve as garden judges at any given time. It is desirable to maintain the maximum level of garden judges in each region to insure that the vote reflects a representative sample of cultivar performance across the country for hostas winning Benedict Garden Performance awards.

## **Balloting Procedures**

The Garden Performance Chair prepares ballots for the Benedict Garden Performance Awards in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Benedict Garden Performance Awards System and distributes the ballots to the garden judges by April 15 of each year.

Garden judges will complete the ballot, using the selection criteria and Point Scales for Judging that are outlined in Section IV-G of this Handbook to make selections for the various awards. The ballot must be returned to the Garden Performance Chair by October 15.

The Garden Performance Chair will then compile the results and provide them to the Vice President – Awards and Honors and the Vice President – Judging and Exhibitions by November 1.

Although it is an honor to vote for the Benedict Garden Performance Awards, it also generates a responsibility for garden judges to view gardens and to observe as many cultivars as possible in order to be able to make an informed decision about garden performance. Voting for the Benedict Garden Performance Awards reinforces the importance of garden viewing, a requirement for all judges. Votes should be based on observed performance within one's own region and/or at National Convention tour gardens. A garden judge may reflect on previous years' observed performance for consideration when voting, but must reinforce that perception with garden visits during the voting year.

Failure of a garden judge to vote in a timely manner without acceptable excuse will result in the person being removed as an accredited AHS Garden Judge. A judge so dismissed may reapply to be an AHS Garden Judge after a two year waiting period. Allowance for failure to vote due to illness or other extenuating circumstances during the year will be at the discretion of the Garden Performance Chair.

## **Presentation of Awards and Publicity**

The Vice President – Awards and Honors will secure and present the Benedict Garden Performance Awards at the American Hosta Society National Convention each year.

The Vice President – Awards and Honors is also responsible for preparing an article for inclusion in Issue 2 of The Hosta Journal each year detailing the winning awards for the year by the deadline established by The Journal Editor. It will be the Editor's responsibility to secure and select the appropriate pictures to accompany the article. A picture of the Benedict Garden Performance Medal should always be included with the article.

## **Benedict Garden Performance Awards Point Scales for Judging**

The Benedict Garden Performance Awards System establishes specific criteria and point scales to be used by garden judges as the basis for selecting cultivars to receive votes for Benedict Garden Performance Awards. The attributes to be considered and the weight each attribute should count are listed below:

- **Aesthetics – 25 points**  
The attractiveness and general appeal of the cultivar, including its flowers, in the garden setting.
- **Distinctiveness – 25 points**  
How unique the cultivar is. How it stands out among other hostas via size, coloration, patterns, form, etc.
- **Multiseasonal Interest – 20 points**  
Seasonal longevity and staying power. How well the cultivar maintains its look throughout the growing season.
- **Vigor – 20 points**  
Ease of cultivation and resistance to disease and pests. How well the cultivar grows and multiplies under normal conditions.
- **Environmental Tolerance – 10 points**  
Resistance to environmental stresses such as wind, rain, heat, drought, early frosts, falling pine needles, etc.