

***West Michigan
Dahlia Society
25th Annual Dahlia Show
2026 National Show and Midwest Show***

August 29-30, 2026



Flowers of the year:

Cleaview Jonas

Baron Aunt Dorothy

Important Highlights

- *** New for 2026 *** All single and three bloom entries will be entered in your grower class. Grower classes are no longer limited to just the AA – BB. They apply to ALL classes of dahlias (0001 – 9715). We have not changed the hill count for grower class determination. You will still count only your AA – BB hills but your grower class will apply to all single and three bloom entries.
- Each exhibitor is limited to four (4) non-ADS entries. Non-ADS entries are defined as cultivars not found in the current or the composite ADS Classification and Handbook of Dahlias (CHD). Also included are named varieties that are **not** in the CHD, the beautiful flower in your garden where the tag is lost, the seedling your buddy gave you to grow, the awesome bloom your friends like in their bouquets, the spectacular cut flower florists pay a premium for as well as all other dahlias not in the CHD. Seedlings are included in this count. **All non-ADS entries must be placed on the classification table with a completed show tag including classification number for review by a senior judge.** Please contact the show manager (Jeff Miner) if you have any questions. If you are bringing more than four (4) seedlings, please let Jeff Miner know.
- Our table numbers are color coded by grower class:
 - Large Grower Section A table numbers are **BLUE**
 - Middle Grower Section B table numbers are **ORANGE**
 - Small Grower Section C table numbers are **RED**
 - Novice Grower Section D table numbers are **YELLOW**
 - Youth Grower Section E table numbers are **GREEN**
 - All other table numbers will remain white
- OASIS – While oasis will be available for use at the show, Frederik Meijer Gardens strongly desires us to limit the use of oasis. As a result, please use vase lids and wedges whenever possible and please limit the use of oasis to the greatest extent possible.

General Rules of the Show

Registration: Exhibitors shall register with the Show Secretary. This may be done beforehand or at the Show. An exhibitor must be a member in good standing in the West Michigan Dahlia Society prior to judging or be a full registrant of the National Show. Blooms can be received from 1:00 PM – midnight on Friday August 29th, 2026. On Saturday morning, the gates will be open at 4:30 AM. Blooms need to be in place by 9:00 AM with the judging beginning shortly thereafter.

Grower Classification: There are four classes of growers for the Show. Novice growers are growers who feel they have not yet gained sufficient experience to show as a Small, Middle, or Large Grower. This section is really designed for the dahlia grower who is beginning to exhibit. In any case, a grower may not exhibit in this section for more than three years. The novices must show all their single-entry blooms in the Novice Section (classes 0001-9715).

The **Small Grower** is one who has a garden with 60 AA-BB size dahlia plants or less. A **Middle Grower** is one who has 61 to 200 AA-BB size dahlias. A **Large Grower** has 201 or more AA-BB dahlias. Those growers who use cloth/lath houses or are a commercial grower must enter as a Large Grower. While grower class is determined by the number of AA – BB hills, grower class applies to all forms.

Non-ADS Cultivars: Each exhibitor is limited to four (4) non-ADS entries. Non-ADS entries are defined as cultivars not found in the current or the composite ADS Classification and Handbook of Dahlias. Seedlings are included in this count. Also included are named varieties that are not in the CHD, the beautiful flower in your garden where the tag is lost, the seedling your buddy gave you to grow, the awesome bloom your friends like in their bouquets, the spectacular cut flower florists pay a premium for as well as all other dahlias not in the CHD. **All non-ADS entries must be placed on the classification table with a completed show tag including classification number for review by a senior judge.** Please contact the show manager (Jeff Miner) if you have any questions.

Exhibition: The Exhibitors must use the standard Midwest Dahlia Conference Show tags onto which they must correctly place the section being entered, the name of the dahlia, its class and the exhibitor number which will be emailed to you prior to the show or be available at the registration table at Frederik Meijer Gardens. The exhibitor number is to be written above the fold so that it is legible without opening the tag. This is to be done in writing, using blue or black ink. On the bottom of the tag, the exhibitor's name is placed. This area is to be covered until such time as the judging has been completed. No entry shall be judged unless the tag is properly completed and readable.

Judges and exhibitors shall use the 2026 edition of the American Dahlia Society Classification and Handbook of Dahlias. All flowers for exhibition must be named varieties, except for seedlings. Those named dahlias that are not listed in the present or past Classification manuals of the ADS must be placed on the Classification Table. The Classification Committee will determine the class, and the tag will bear the mark of this Committee. Once classified, it is the duty of the exhibitor to place the bloom in the proper area. Seedlings must contain the proper numerical identification as outlined by the ADS. Please do not use the Classification Table to identify a dahlia bloom. Only properly named dahlias are put on this Table.

Wiring of stems or artificial support of stems or blooms above the container is prohibited. Oasis blocks and wedges that are above the rim of the container will be regarded as part of the container. Containers for the single and three bloom categories are available from the WMDS and will be at the show. For large entries, the WMDS will have containers on hand, but if the entry is particularly large, then the exhibitor may wish to bring his or her own. Labeled containers not owned by the WMDS will be returned to the owner if at all possible.

The exhibitor must have grown all specimen blooms except for Section (O) – Artistic Design and the ADS Bench. An exhibitor may place as many entries in a single class as desired. Should an entry be found to be misplaced, it may be moved to the proper area. However, if the proper area has already been judged, the entry is not to be considered for judging. The judging teams will not go back and re-judge misplaced entries.

The blooms from the show will be given away free to the public at 4:30 PM on Sunday.

Judging: The judges may award a first, second, and third place ribbon in each class as they deem the entries deserve. No first need be given in any class, even in classes where a second or third are awarded. Blooms will be judged with no penalty or premium points for being oversize or undersize. When judging mircros, miniatures, miniature balls, poms, and mignon singles, judges should consider and may reward diminutiveness in a dahlia. Judges should reward those growers that use their horticultural skills to grow dahlias within the size range as classified. Only first place entries will be allowed on the Court of Honor. The Show Management and the judges reserve the right to remove any unworthy entry.

Stems on single and multiple bloom entries must contain at least one pair of leaves above the container to be judged. This pair must be the initial pair that forms beneath the bloom. There is no height limitation to any entry, but judges often need to fully view the top of the bloom. Be aware that this may necessitate moving the entry to place it on the floor. Fully double dahlias that exhibit a blown center (whether single or multiple bloom entries) are ineligible to be judged, except for Section O.

In judging AA through Miniature sections, judges are to judge each color class, and from all the blue ribbon entries in the section (ie. 0001-0015) pick the best of the section. This winner is then given a Special Award. Judges then select the section winners of the five other sections of that size group (ie. 0101-0115, 0201-0215, 0301-0315, 0401-0415, and 0501-0515). Finally, up to six section winners may be available for selecting the best bloom of the size category (ie AAs). This winner gets a second Special Award and goes to the Court of Honor.

In all other classes judges will judge to color class and then select the best entry of the blue ribbon winners in that class. This entry is given a Special Award and sent to the Court of Honor for further judging where it may remain or it may be returned to the show table. If there is only one blue ribbon entry in a Section, that entry will be given a Special Award and will be sent to the Court of Honor.

Judges will judge the three bloom entries from Section E - H in an identical fashion to the single entries in sections A-D.

In matters of judgment, the decisions of the judges shall be final. Protests will not be considered.

Awards: Monetary prizes are given to all entries on the Court of Honor. In order to assure accuracy, the awards will be mailed or handed to the exhibitor after the close of the Show.

Responsibility: The Show Management and Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park will not be responsible for the loss or damage to exhibits or personal property of the exhibitors, but will exercise the utmost care in the protection of all exhibits. No blooms may be removed from the Show except with the consent of the Show Chairman. All blooms shall become the property of the Show Management. All suitable exhibits will remain in place until close at 4:30 PM on Sunday.

Exhibition Sections

Single Bloom Entries:

Single bloom entries will be entered in Sections A – D as presented below. Blooms and completed tags are to be placed into the proper class (0001-9715) on the show tables. Judges will follow judging principles as presented in the ADS Guide to Judging Dahlias in picking the winners. The best bloom from each form or class will go to the court of honor to compete against the other grower sections for the best in show for that form or class (i.e. best AA or best Anemone).

Section A: Large Grower Single Bloom Entries Blue Table Numbers

Section B: Middle Grower Single Bloom Entries Orange Table Numbers

Section C: Small Grower Single Bloom Entries Red Table Numbers

Section D: Novice Grower Single Bloom Entries Yellow Table Numbers: A Special Award is given to the Best Large Bloom (0001-3515) and the Best Small Bloom (4001-9715). These are the only two entries that go to the court of honor from this section.

Three Bloom Entries:

Three bloom entries will be entered in Sections E – H as presented below. Blooms and completed tags are to be placed into the proper class (0001-9715) on the show tables. Judges will follow judging principles as presented in the ADS Guide to Judging Dahlias in picking the winners. The best bloom from each form or class will go to the court of honor to compete against the other grower sections for the best in show for that form or class (i.e. best AA or best Anemone).

Section E: Large Grower Three Blue Table Numbers

Section F: Medium Grower Three Orange Table Numbers

Section G: Small Grower Three Red Table Numbers

Section H: Novice Grower Three Yellow Table Numbers

Section I: Youth

All youth (18 and younger) entries will be placed in this section. To qualify for entry in this Section, the blooms must be planted, cared for and staged by a youth grower. Blooms cultivated from a garden where the youth assists in the garden do **not** qualify for this Section as the blooms must

be primarily tended by a youth. If chemical treatments are required, it is acceptable for an adult to apply the chemical. There are no triple entries for Youth.

Section J: Multiple bloom entries are placed in this section. Any suitable container may be used, and it may have a handle if desired. The exhibit is to be viewed from the front. No non-dahlia foliage, wiring, or artificial materials may be used. Blooms must be of the same variety. The exhibit(s) must contain the following number of blooms according to classification:

J-1	AA-A	5 or more blooms
J-2	B	5 or more blooms
J-3	BB	5 or more blooms
J-4	Min.; Ba; Mba; Pom	7 or more blooms
J-5	PE; AN; NO; CO; O; OT; S; MS	7 or more blooms
J-6	Stellar; WL; NX	7 or more blooms
J-7	All Micros	7 or more blooms

Judges will be evaluating the exhibits for proper staging of the blooms, considering height, balance, structure, and bloom placement. They will also consider individual size, shape, and facing of the blooms. Remember that each bloom must have its first pair of leaves present. Any or all the other leaves may be removed to allow for proper staging and elimination of leaf crowding.

Each entry is to be judged to color class, and then the best entry in each of the J-1 to J-7 sections will be placed on the Court of Honor.

Section K: Sponsorships and Memorials

Please see separate document for the complete list of sponsored classes.

Section L: Flower of the Year: *Clearview Jonas and Baron Aunt Dorothy* are the WMDS large and small flower of the year. This will be a single bloom entry. Only blooms entered in this section will be considered for winning this section. Blooms entered in general competition will not be in the running for winning flower of the year. You will need to decide which section of the show you want to show your bloom!

Section M: Farmer's Market Bunch A "farmer's market bunch" typically refers to a bundle or arrangement of freshly cut flowers sold by local farmers or growers at a farmer's market. Farmer's market bunches are prized for their freshness, seasonal variety, and often for their sustainability and support of local agriculture. This category will focus specifically on these bunches utilizing dahlias.

Objective: Evaluate the freshness of the blooms with scores that rank marketability and favor good grower management for a commonly found market item.

Judges will evaluate the following:

Marketability: This bunch needs to arrive in quality condition, as good as or better than acceptable market standards with a customer focus.

Grower Management: The grower's ability and skill to produce a healthy plant and process cut stems to maintain quality and freshness.

Color:

- It is ok for blooms to have even and uneven distribution of colors.
- Muted, Muddy (brown), Vintage & Blends are ok.
- Blends do not need to have even distribution.
- Variegated varieties are allowed to have uneven distribution.
- It is ok for Bicolors to have bleeding and uneven distribution. They may also have solid and bicolored ray florets.

Categories:

- 1) Single color or single cultivar bunches
- 2) Mixed bunch category – a variety of colors, cultivars and shapes

Each bunch must contain a minimum of 7 stems.

Guidance for the Judges

Judges will need to pick up and handle bunches to evaluate characteristics.

No crushed leaves and petals on blooms. There may or may not be leaves, however if they do have leaves they need to be outside of the water.

No crushed or torn cut-ends of stem

Buds are fine as long as they aren't wilting/drooping and they do not count towards the 7 blooms.

Rules

Use of wire and artificial means of supporting stems and/or blooms will disqualify entry.

Minimum stem length of 12"

Bound with one rubber band for security

No wrapping

No additional foliage, filler or non-dahlias

Must be placed in a clear container. Exhibitor must provide the container!!! We will gather them at the end of the show and return them to you if you are not present.

If it's one variety, please place that on the show tag. If it's mixed, please note that it's mixed or unknown.

Limit of 3 entries per person per category.

Cut Flower Score Card

Color.....25

It is ok for blooms to have even and uneven distribution of colors. Muted, Muddy (brown), Vintage & Blends are ok. Blends do not need to have even distribution. Variegated varieties are allowed to have uneven distribution. It is ok for Bicolors to have bleeding and uneven distribution. They may also have solid and bicolored ray florets. Must be appealing & useful (as in a color that will sell in bouquets).

Stem Quality

Firm blossom attachment.....20

Firmness & Integrity.....10

(Blooms are not bruised or crushed. Stems should be strong with a stem that doesn't arch and is not weak. Stems aren't too large in diameter. The cut edge is clean, fresh and straight.)

Stem length (min 12").....10

(long strong straight stems preferred)

Freshness

Condition of petals.....15

(lack of damage and good moisture content, no shedding petals)

Harvested at appropriate stage.....10

(appropriate stage is slightly immature, young and still developing, no pollen present, green centers ok)

Uniformity of age of blooms.....10

(Blooms should be relatively the same maturation stage.)

Section N: ADS Bench Evaluation: American Dahlia Society seedling must have 3 blooms for the entry. Show officials and exhibitors must read and adhere to the rules for entries and judging as printed in the current ADS Classification and Handbook of Dahlias. Those wishing to enter this area are asked to contact the show chair prior to the show.

Section O: Artistic Design – The Great Lakes State

Class 1: Michigan – The State of Two Peninsulas

Michigan stands out as the only state featuring two peninsulas, known as the upper and lower peninsulas. The state's motto, "If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you," inspires this category. Exhibitors are tasked with creating a dahlia design using two containers that connect in unity to represent this theme.

Class 2: Michigan's Coastline

With over 3,000 miles of shoreline, Michigan boasts the longest fresh-water coastline in the world. Participants should design a dahlia arrangement that evokes a beachy atmosphere, utilizing elements such as water, driftwood, and sand.

Class 3: Michigan's Forests

More than half of Michigan is covered by forests, with leaves serving as a symbol of these woodlands. Exhibitors are to use foliage and creative leaf manipulation in their dahlia artistic designs.

Class 4: Michigan Agriculture

Michigan is widely recognized for its agriculture, including fruits, vegetables, and grains. Dahlia designs in this class should incorporate any of these agricultural elements.

Class 5: Tribute to Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

Frederik Meijer Gardens in Michigan is a world-class art destination, currently hosting the "Chihuly at Meijer Gardens" exhibit. Participants are invited to create a dahlia design that pays tribute to this notable exhibition.

Class 6: Novice Designer's Tribute to Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

This class is designed for exhibitors who consider themselves novice designers, those who feel they have not yet gained sufficient experience to compete with seasoned participants.

Participants are encouraged to draw inspiration from one of the following outdoor gardens when creating their dahlia designs as a tribute to Frederik Meijer Gardens:

- Japanese Garden: This garden exemplifies traditional Japanese landscaping principles and offers a serene environment that fosters contemplation and a deeper appreciation of the natural world.
- Children's Garden: Created to both inspire and educate, the Children's Garden features interactive components that engage young visitors, sparking curiosity and wonder about gardening and the outdoors.
- Michigan Farm Garden: Highlighting Michigan's agricultural legacy, this garden replicates a classic farm atmosphere, complete with cultivated crops and rustic features.

This class is a sponsored class eligible for an additional \$50 prize.

Class 7: Youth Design

This class is open to junior participants under the age of 16. Young designers are invited to create a dahlia arrangement inspired by any of the themes or guidelines presented in Classes 1 through 6. This provides juniors with the opportunity to explore a variety of concepts, ranging from Michigan agriculture and tributes to Frederik Meijer Gardens to novice interpretations of outdoor garden spaces. The aim is to encourage creativity and engagement among youth, while allowing them to select the class theme that resonates most with their interests and abilities. Identify which class theme on entry tag.

Rules and Regulations

The artistic design competition is open to all interested participants. To enter, individuals must register in advance by contacting Kathy Stevenson at kastevenson2@aol.com. Early registration is encouraged, as the number of entries may be limited due to space constraints.

Floral Design Requirements

Each floral design must be crafted by the exhibitor submitting the entry. Dahlias are required to be the predominant flower in every arrangement. The use of artificial plant materials is strictly prohibited; however, dried flower materials are permitted. Exhibitors are not required to grow their own flowers or plant materials for their designs.

Arrangements must not exceed 24 inches by 28 inches in size. There is no restriction on the height of the entries. Wire may be used to stabilize the flowers, but it should remain hidden and not be visible within the arrangement.

Entry Logistics and Liability

Exhibitors are responsible for providing and labeling all containers and materials used in their designs, ensuring that labels are placed out of view. The Western Michigan Dahlia Society (WMDS) will not be liable for any loss or damage to entries, although every effort will be made to protect them.

Show Procedures

All entries must be in place by 9:00 AM on Saturday, August 29, 2026. Entries are required to remain on display until the conclusion of the show on Sunday, unless special permission is granted by the Show Chair. Exhibitors are responsible for removing their entries after the show has closed.

Awards and Judging

The first-place winner in each category will compete for the distinction of "Best Overall Artistic Design of Show," which will be featured on the Honor Table. Judging will be conducted by National Garden Clubs Accredited Judges, with each class being judged separately.

Entry Limits and Additional Information

Each exhibitor is permitted to submit up to three designs in total and is encouraged to enter more than one class. A 3"x 5" index card may be displayed to explain how the design relates to the overall theme.

Section P: Midwest Conference Classes

P – 1 A single-bloom entry of any dahlia originated in the Midwest.

P – 2 A three-bloom entry of any dahlia originated in the Midwest.

P – 3 Best Liz Evangelista

Section Q: Photography

1. Open to all photographers. Images must be the work of the exhibitor and taken in 2025 or 2026.
2. Due to space constraints, there is a limit of 3 total entries per person. Each entry must be in separate classes.

3. Photo prints must be 4" x 6" and matted on 5 x 7" paper or cardstock. No larger entries will be accepted.
4. Images may be edited for brightness, contrast, sharpness, or color adjustment. No other image manipulation may be used for entries, except in class 7.
5. AI generated images, including those created by text prompts, are prohibited.
6. The exhibitor's name and address must be clearly visible on the back of the matting on each entry. Each entry must also be accompanied by a completed entry tag noting the class and section.
7. All entries must be in place no later than 9:00 am on Saturday, August 29th, 2026.
8. Judging will be by local photography professionals.
9. All photography entries must remain in place until the show closes on Sunday, August 30th.

Photo competition is open to everyone. Be creative, show us your best.

Categories

1. Single Bloom
2. Multiple Bloom
3. Close up View
4. Dahlias in the Garden (may include people and critters)
5. Dahlias at Sunrise or Sunset
6. Dahlias from the perspective of "worm's eye view" or "bird's eye view"
7. Creative/Artistic Expression

Largest in Show: The single entry bloom that has won a blue ribbon and has the greatest numerical value by multiplying the depth by the diameter is the largest bloom in the show. It will be placed on the Court of Honor.

Court of Honor

Please see separate document for the complete list of entries to be included on the court of honor.