



The American Hosta Society

January 2022

eNewsletter



H. 'His Honor'

J. Wilkins, 2000

(Photo by Mary Vertz)

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President's Message

Andy Marlow, Hopkins, MN

The end of a year and the beginning of a new one is a time for both reflection and anticipation. Looking back on 2021, much was accomplished despite the continuing pandemic. We had a smashing virtual convention. We elected new officers to serve for at least the next two years. *The Hosta Journal* and eNewsletters arrived right on time. We had an in-person Board meeting in the Twin Cities, with just two of our members Zooming in from home. And the board adopted plans that will spin out over the next few years to add value to your membership and, hopefully, more members to the American Hosta Society. Stay tuned for news on that.

And what should we anticipate for 2022. Number one on my list is our first in-person annual convention in two years. And it's happening right in my backyard of the Twin Cities. The Minnesota Hosta Society is the host and has been champing at the bit ever since they had to cancel the 2020 convention. Most of the same events are on the schedule. Gardeners and speakers were eager to renew their commitments. We hope you can plan to attend June 8-11.

It's easy to register. Just visit to convention website at www.hostavision2022.com and fill out the online registration form. You can pay online by credit or debit card, or print out your form and mail it in along with your check. A registration form is also included with the latest issue of *The Hosta Journal*.

Personally, I also have a few New Year's resolutions. Number one is to finally get all my hostas labeled. I have had the same resolution for the last two or three years and have made some progress. But now I have to enlist the aid of friends more knowledgeable than I to identify some of the varieties whose names have been forgotten.

My other garden resolution is to sustain my interest and energy throughout the growing season. My enthusiasm brims over in the spring, but I usually

lose some steam (am I mixing metaphors?) over the summer, much to the benefit of the weeds.

As President of AHS, my resolution is to have all our national positions filled.

Toward that goal, I have appointed Penelope Kerrigan to the open post of AHS Club Liaison. She says she has always had an interest in the genus *Hosta*. In 2013 she and her brother purchased White Oak Nursery. They operated the business together until June of 2017. While living in Illinois, she was a member of the Central Illinois Hosta Society and co-chair of the Midwest Regional Hosta Convention in 2018 in Peoria. Also, in 2017, she received a Presidential Award for helping with the electronic registry site for AHS. She currently lives in Waverly Hall, GA. Penelope says she is honored to be given the opportunity to work as AHS Club Liaison.

But the positions of Parliamentarian, Education Chair, Member Display Gardens Chair, Newsletter Coordinator and Public Relations Chair remain open. That's a lot of jobs to fill, but we have a lot of talented members. If you are one of those and interested in one of these positions, please contact me. Or if you know of someone who would be a good fit, let me know, too. I will not tell who pushed them forward!



H. 'Ginsu Knife'
Photo by Mary Vertz

Meet Your New Board Members...



Phyllis Weidman:

Vice President Member Services

My love affair with hostas started 40 years ago when living in Columbus, Ohio. Nancy Gill, yes, *H*, 'Nancy Gill' is named for her, introduced me to Handy Hatfield. They encouraged my husband and I to start collecting hosta. In 1995 we relocated to St. Louis with a truck full of hostas to plant in our new gardens. That same year we joined the American Hosta Society and attended our first AHS Convention. That changed our world. We joined the local society and started attending conventions, regional meetings, winter scientific meetings, and became AHS Judges.

I was Co-Chair of the AHS Convention in 2008 and Chair of the Hosta Leaf Show in 2016. It was exciting to show off St. Louis to the AHS membership. Showing off hostas to lots of people includes being a volunteer at the Missouri Botanical Garden. Volunteering since 1996 and the last 9 year in the hosta area. It is with great joy to talk to people about my passion, hosta.

Locally I have been member of the St. Louis Hosta Society holding many offices and I'm currently president. Starting in 2013, AHS asked me to be Chair of the National Display Garden committee. It was wonderful to help hosta enthusiasts all over the country earn the status of an AHS National Display Garden. Now I'm the VP of Member Services. Hopefully I will be able to give to members the services that enhance their membership in the AHS.



Hostas and Associates

Glenn Herold, Cedarburg, WI

It's easy for me to talk about this plant, for it has long been one of my 5 favorite hostas. *Hosta* 'Regal Splendor' was found in the tissue culture lab of Walters Gardens in 1987 while propagating 'Krossa Regal'. It retained all the great characteristics of its parent, plus it had a creamy-white edge.



H. 'Regal Splendor'
Photo by Glenn Herold

H. 'Regal Splendor' is a large plant and, though slow growing, develops a vase shape, keeping the leaves up and off the ground. Foliage is blue-green to dark green with a yellow to creamy-white edge. The edge is about 3/4 inch wide at the base and tapers to about 1/4 inch wide near the tip. Leaves are wavy, thick, and have a substantial bloom on the underside.

Flowers are lavender and form in July and August on scapes that often reach a height of 5 feet. This characteristic was inherited from *Hosta ni-*

grecens, which is one of the parents of 'Krossa Regal'. The plant does not produce pods, so breeding with it is not successful.



H. 'Krossa Regal'
Photo by Glenn Herold

Though there are many sports of '*H. Krossa Regal*', very few have been found on 'Regal Splendor'. 'Regal Affair' is similar to 'Regal Splendor' with a white edge surrounding a green center, not nearly as attractive as the original, though. 'Regal Splendor Splash,' 'Trail of Tears,' and 'Zippy Zepps' are all streaked forms. Usually, streaked plants make good breeders, but not so with these three. None of the above are widely available in the trade, though I would consider planting 'Zippy Zepps' just for the name!

Because of its upright growth habit, attractive creamy edged blue leaves, and wavy margin, *H. 'Regal Splendor'* is an eye-catcher in the garden. Plant it next to its parent 'Krossa Regal' or massed as a background for smaller shade plants. I guarantee it will become one of your favorites as well.

Walters Gardens celebrated their 75th year in business in 2021, established in 1946 by Dennis Walters. Prior to starting Walters Gardens, Dennis worked as a gardener at Knoll Farm in Zeeland, Michigan. While there, he was attracted to and eventually married Harriet Knoll, the daughter of the owners. Together, they bought out Knoll Farm and changed to the name that exists today. Four of Dennis' brother joined him in the venture.

Dennis Walters was known as an innovator and a gambler. Walters Gardens was one of the first in the industry to publish a color catalog. Rather than going into retail, they specialized in wholesale sales of bare root and plug perennials. They continued to expand from their original five to over 1500 acres. A major change occurred in the 1980s when they went into greenhouse production. This expansion transpired shortly after the emergence of tissue culture as a reliable means of propagation. Walters Gardens was having trouble with diseases in their creeping phlox, so with the help of professors at Michigan State University, they established a tissue culture lab. Most of the other staff at Walters Gardens was against this step, but Dennis saw it as the wave of the future. Walters now boasts over 500,000 sq. ft. of greenhouse space and produces over 20 million perennials per year.

Walters Gardens is heavily involved in plant development, with Hans Hansen now the director. Over their 75 years, they have introduced hundreds of plants, *Hibiscus* ‘Summer Storm’ being their first hybridized introduction. Many are available through their partnership with Proven Winners®. Some of their hosta introductions include *Hosta* ‘Autumn Frost’, ‘Diamond Lake’, ‘Etched Glass’, ‘Mighty Mouse’, ‘Regal Splendor’, ‘Silly String’ (the 2021 AHS convention plant), ‘Tears of Heaven’, ‘Waterslide’, and ‘Wu-La-La’. You can be assured that, like ‘Regal Splendor’, a plant that was developed at Walters Gardens will be a proven winner in your garden.



H. 'Backyard Monster'
Photo by Mary Vertz



GO HOSTAS!

Warren I. Pollock, Glen Mills, PA

GO HOSTAS!

The Other Critical Wintertime

Temperature: 42-44° F (5.6-6.7° C)

Certainly, everyone in Hostadom knows that 32 degrees Fahrenheit (0 degree Celsius) is the freezing temperature of water. But there is another “critical wintertime temperature”, used extensively in commercial horticulture, that’s not known by most gardeners. For the genus *Hosta* it is:

42-44° F (5.6-6.7° C).

This is the *temperature considered below which* hosta roots are dormant. In other words, *hostas no longer seek water from surrounding soil for existence*. It is the *temperature above which hostas need water and nutrients*.

You’ll note it is a **temperature range**, not a single temperature. I consulted with several highly regarded hosta horticulturists. They all said they were aware of this critical temperature but were not aware of any specific studies to determine this temperature for hostas. *They all thought it was probably between 42° and 44° F*. Thus, I’m listing this *other wintertime temperature* for hostas as **42-44° F**.

My first experience with this subject was a visit to Marco Fransen’s famous hosta nursery in Ter Aar, The Netherlands, many years ago. It was in a discussion we had on *H. ‘Karen’* versus *H. ‘Karin’*.

In 1999, Bob Olson, *The Hosta Journal’s* editor, registered a hosta with name ‘Karen’. It’s a sport of *H. ‘Crepe Suzette’* × *H. ‘Blue Moon’*, named for Bob’s wife. In 2005, Gerard Heemskerk, proprietor of a large hosta and

hemerocallis wholesale nursery in Noorwijk, The Netherlands, registered *H.* 'Karin', named for one of his daughters. It is a reverse-variegated sport of *H.* 'Anne', a Heemskerk introduction registered in 1999.

H. 'Anne', not patented, is considered to be tetraploid. Since 'Karin' sported from 'Anne', Karin' is considered tetraploid, also. Heemskerk patented 'Karin' in 2002: U.S. PP12,663 and European Union PBR8658.



H. 'Karen' (Photo Carol Brashear)



H. 'Karin' (Photo Carol Brashear)

I've known Marco since he and his wife, Joyce, attended the AHS national convention in Peoria, Illinois, in 1998. His hosta knowledge is encyclopedic. We must have spent well over an hour taking (in English) about what's new in European Hostadom and what some important issues are.

Since I had 'Karen' in my garden and it is among my favorite hostas, I asked Marco about 'Karin' that Heemskeerck recently introduced. Marco asked me if I had seen 'Karin' other than in photos. I responded, "No." He then asked if I would like a clump. I, of course, was positive but reminded him I wouldn't be back in America to plant it for maybe two weeks. "Not a problem!" he enthusiastically responded. "I have it in my 'fridge.'" (Marco used a Dutch word for the facility but I don't recall what it was.)

He asked me to follow him to a small building, window-less with door noticeably locked. It was refrigerated and had stacks of cardboard boxes each containing dormant hosta clumps. Marco found a box labeled 'Karin', opened it and took out a two-division bare-root clump.

Handing it to me, he said, "Try to keep it cool during your travels in Europe and going home. Plant it as soon as possible when you're back in America."

I asked Marco what the building's temperature was. He said, "About 6 degrees." He, of course, meant Celsius: 6° *Celsius* which is about 43° Fahrenheit. (I need to mention it was August and daytime temperature in the nursery was about 75°F [23.9° C].)

When I arrived home, I immediately planted 'Karin'. In about two weeks it had leaves in abundance. *H.* 'Karin' is different from 'Karen': 'Karin's leaves are dark green, creamy white edge; 'Karen's, blue-green, white edge.

Walters Gardens, Inc., the huge wholesale perennial nursery in Zeeland, Michigan, has refrigerated rooms for temporarily storing plants. What specific plants go in them, when and for how long, are determined by the anticipated markets' supply-and-demand forecasts.

WGI's facilities are called "coolers and "freezers." In late November 2021 when I wrote this item, the "coolers" were set at 35° and 36° F (1.7° and 2.2° C) — well below the "other critical wintertime temperature". The

“freezers” were set at 27° and 30°F (-2° and -1.1° C). The “freezers” are principally used when there can be mold problems with the 35-36° F “coolers” and anti-mold chemicals are required.

The florist industry is critically dependent on the “other wintertime temperature”. In the big flower display cases in florist shops, groceries and up-market specialty stores, temperature is set between 34° and 36° F (1.1° and 2.2° C). Their refrigeration control mechanisms are among the most sophisticated and reliable. In addition, humidity levels of 90 to 95 percent are needed for cut flowers, and there is automated control of humidity in the show cases, also.

If you are wondering what the temperature is in your kitchen refrigerator, probably it is 40° F (4.4° C) or a bit lower. Likely temperature of your freezer is about 0 degree F (-17.8° C) or thereabouts.

Keen hosta gardeners should know about what I’ve dubbed “other wintertime temperature” *and utilize it when the winter and early spring weather begins warming up.* I’m mentioning it in this January 2022 *GO HOSTAS!* column as *an early heads up of what you need to do when your hostas start to become active after winter dormancy.* The next *GO HOSTAS!* column is in April 2022 *and by then your hostas will likely be in foliage.*

This is the rule-of-thumb: ***Your hostas start to become active when the outdoor temperature is more than about 42-44° F — not at 32° F nor at temperatures between 32° and about 42-44° F. Simply, at about 42-44° F and greater, your hostas need WATER, WATER, WATER — and also fertilization, too. It’s before you see pips on the crowns.***

I cannot enough stress the importance of plentifully watering when the weather warms to about 42-44° F. Chances are your hostas have been wintering in a somewhat dry or slightly moist environment. **They want water.** If you hand water with a hose, be prepared to be outdoors watering for quite some time. If you have an installed irrigation system [see item at the end of this column], leave it on for quite a while.

Over the years I've collected a bunch of excuses gardeners have relayed to me when I state they need to copiously water their hostas when the temperature warms up to the "other critical wintertime temperature range". Some examples: "But my TV weatherman (now often a weather gal) said showers are expected late today or tomorrow or the day after tomorrow." "It rained for several hours last week." "Rain is 50% forecasted for next week." "My irrigation system isn't turned on yet." Perhaps the most bizarre is "It's way too early for me to be outside in the garden."

Forget feeble excuses especially involving Mother Nature: On your own initiative WATER, WATER and WATER.

I mention that your hostas also need fertilizer. I am a strong proponent of organic gardening principles. Nonetheless, I don't use organic fertilizers *initially when I feed my hostas after their winter dormancy*. This is because some vital constituents in many organic fertilizers take months to fully convert to nutrients in an ionic water-soluble state where roots can utilize the minerals immediately. Nor do I initially use so-called "slow-" or "controlled-release" fertilizers. I apply them later in spring. *Simply, I want immediate release of N, P, K and other elements.*

I use Miracle-Gro® Water Soluble Tomato Plant Food (18-18-21) at about full strength. It contains magnesium which enhances plant's green color and improves flower blooming. The Mg content is 0.50% and probably from Epsom salt which is hydrated magnesium sulfate. There are claims that Epsom salt helps plants grow bushier and improves nutrient intake — but I've never seen these scientifically verified.



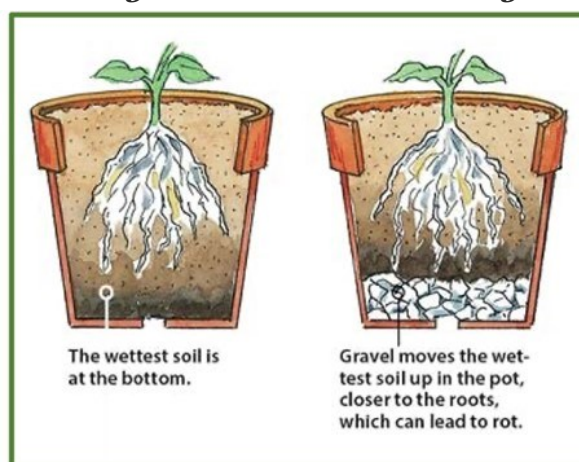
Rocks, Gravel & other Stuff in the Bottom of Pots DO NOT IMPROVE POT DRAINAGE

The August 2020 issue of East Tennessee Hosta Society's *Hosta Happenings* has a most interesting article titled "Debunking Gardening Myths. Myth #6: Gravel improves pot drainage."

Mary L. Albrecht (plantpro@gmail.com), ETHS Communications Director, authored it. Many thanks to her for permission to reprint the article with its images in *GO HOSTAS!* and for discussions we had on this intriguing multi-faceted subject.

Dr. Albrecht received a Bachelor of Science degree, cum laude, in Horticulture from Rutgers University in 1975 and earned a Ph.D. degree in Floriculture from The Ohio State University in 1980. That year she joined the faculty of Kansas State University. In 1996 she joined the faculty of University of Tennessee – Knoxville, becoming Head of the Department of Ornamental Horticulture and Landscape Design at UT. She was the first woman to head a horticulture department in the United States. In 2001 Dean Albrecht was named a fellow in the American Society for Horticultural Science. She is now retired.

"It's all about the soil physics," she wrote in her fascinating article. "Potting mixes sold in garden centers are designed for maximum aeration/porosity and optional water holding capacity. Roots need both air and water to survive. The bottom of containers is where the potting mix will be the wettest due to what is called a 'perched water table' that is created by the bottom of the pot, *even though there is a drainage hole*. 'Perched' means 'gathered.'



“If you add gravel to the bottom of the container, or as some people suggest Styrofoam® packing peanuts, *all you are doing is reducing potting mix*. The result is less capacity to hold air and raising the perched water table.

“Try this experiment. Potting mix has micro-pore space. The micro-pore space holds the water once the mix has drained. Air will be in the macro-pore space once the water drains out. Now think of a sponge. It also has micro- and macro-pore spaces. The sponge is still damp if you squeeze it as hard as you can. That’s because of the water that remains in the micro-pore space.

“Now take a sponge and get it good and wet. Hold it so the smallest dimension (the thickness of the sponge) is horizontal. Allow the water to drain.



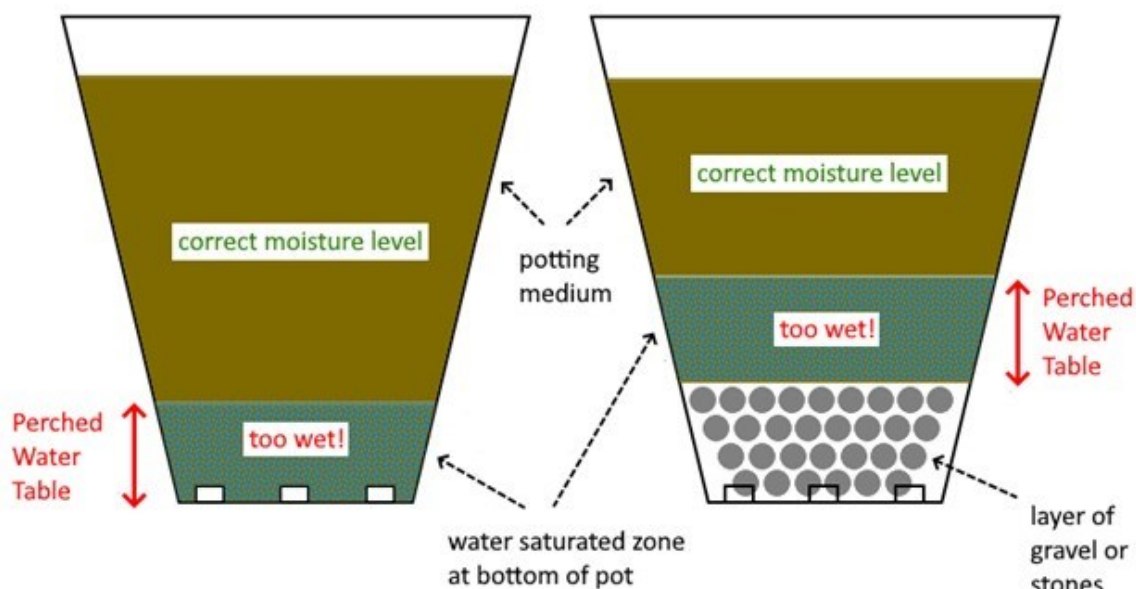
But don’t squeeze the sponge. “Once it stops dripping, hold the sponge so the width is vertical. Water will again drip out! Once it stops dripping, hold the sponge so the length is vertical. You’ll find even more water drips out.

“Well, think of the sponge as the depth of a pot. The deeper the pot, there will be more efficient drainage. *So don’t shorten the depth of the pot by adding rocks, gravel and other items in the bottom!*”

I asked Dr. Albrecht how can you increase drainage of the perched water table? “Add materials throughout all of the potting medium,” she responded. “This will increase the air spaces in the mix and reduce capillary action. By mixing coarse material with the fines, such as some hardwood bark with potting mix, you are creating macro-pore space and reducing micro-pore space and actually improving drainage through having macro-pore space.”

“The key to not putting gravel etc. in the bottom of pots is you want to eliminate the perched water table. The increase in macro-pore space is a bonus. Think about the sponges. You aren't changing anything about their macro-to micro-pore space balance, just changing the length of the capillaries upon which gravity pulls the water through. The longer the channels, the better the drainage. So, in essence, capillarity is improved.”

The Effect of the Perched Water Table in Pots When Using Gravel Underneath



The myth of gravel at the bottom of a pot might, in part, have originated from water running through gravel faster than soil. On the other hand, soil holds water better than gravel. Soil acts like a sponge: water won't run out of gravel, or out of the pot, or anywhere, until the soil is saturated.

Most important, the drainage hole at the bottom of pots and other containers needs to be covered just enough so the soil doesn't leach out but water can flow freely through the pot. Drainage hole material should also keep plant roots from growing through the holes.

In the past, gardening books—especially those directed at houseplants — often advised a single rock or shard covering the hole. But it seems now the universal drainage advice is adding rocks and gravel to the bottom of the pot. Not surprising in today's highly commercial world, bags of a particular pulverized gravel are marketed on the Internet specifically to be added to pots *for improved drainage!*

John Baker and partner June Colley in England use Styrofoam®. Their garden is the truly horticultural wonderment called “The Hanging Hosta Garden” in Lindford, Hampshire. It has plants growing in more than 3200 pots of which over 2000 are hostas!

John Baker, who serves as The British Hosta and Hemerocallis Society's secretary, authored an excellent comprehensive article “Going to Pot” in Spring 2020, Volume 4, issue of *BHHS Journal*, pages 45-51 — which I highly recommend. “Adding drainage materials to the bottom of pots,” he wrote, “is helpful particularly in our damp climate. *We have successfully recycled Styrofoam materials broken into small pieces.*”

These days it seems the most widely used covering for drainage holes universally is insect/bug window screening. I consider it the best material since it's inert to pest damage, doesn't decay and probably will last forever. All my containers with hostas planted in them have a piece of aluminum or fiberglass window screen covering the drainage holes.

Hosta gardeners have used other materials, too. Included are newspaper, cardboard, paper coffee filter, broken pots and crockery (shards) and even the aromatic laundry dryer sheet which is of a polymeric composition. Ideally, drainage hole coverings also should keep plant roots from growing through the holes.

Appropriately, John Baker stated in his classic “Going to Pot” article: “One cannot overwater hostas growing in pots if the soil drains well and there are open drainage holes.” He further added: “Ensure that water can easily flow out of the bottom of the pots after a thorough soaking.”

Good practice is to routinely check that the drainage holes are open. Also, good practice is not to have the pots sitting directly on the ground. Instead, elevate them a bit, which will have them drain adequately. A bonus for elevating containers is it permits easy visibility of the holes’ draining. Elevation can be as little as about 3/16th inch (about 4.8 mm). In the past, when I gardened in Wilmington, Delaware, I used poker chips to prop up containers off the ground.

I now live in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania, and my balcony is my garden! Instead of elevating the containers, I have saucers under them catching the drain water. This permits me to easily see if the containers are draining. The saucers are emptied as needed.

John also stressed: “Water plants well in late autumn *before they go dormant*. Hostas require very little extra moisture during the winter once the leaves have gone down.”

I need to mention that there are some excellent articles on the Internet concerning perched water table in garden pots and resulting problem. In particular, I recommend those written by Horticultural Agents in State Cooperative Extensions in University of North Carolina and University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Also recommended is YouTube video titled “Perched Water Table...?” by “Soil Scientist Ashley” of “Gardening in Canada” podcast channel.

From these presentations, I interestingly learned it doesn’t have to be rocks or gravel that are placed at the bottom of the pot. *ANY layer of difference will contribute towards a perched water table*—such as a different potting mix, soda beverage cans and golf balls among them.

I have an advanced scientific background: Accordingly, *fundamentally I trust science*. Nevertheless, I'm a probing, inquisitive fellow. So, I decided to query Tony Avent, the highly regarded proprietor of Plant Delights Nursery in Raleigh, North Carolina, on this issue. He's an old friend. Tony generally is up-to-date on horticultural science and technology.

"Tony," I humbly inquired, "are you in favor of adding gravel, rocks, shards, Styrofoam such as packaging peanuts and other stuff to the bottom of containers, covering the drain holes, *to improve pot drainage?*"

His response: "I don't know any educated gardener who would promote such a ridiculous idea. This reduces soil drainage instead of improving it, by reducing the depth of similar materials which gravity can act on to remove water...Soil Physics 101."

BOTTOM LINE: If you have been potting your hostas in containers with rocks, gravel or other materials in the bottom for drainage improvement *and have been satisfied with the quality of the plants growing in them*, it seems you have a critical decision to make: Either damn (disregard) Soil Physics 101 and continue to do what you have been doing. *Or* in future potting of hostas in containers, *eliminate the "drainage stuff"*.

*I am interested to know what folks decide **and why**. Please inform me. My email address is giboshiwip@aol.com.*

END NOTE: In the Fall 2021 issue of *The Hosta Journal*, Volume 52, Number 2. Bob Olson, its editor, has a very informative article "Overwintering" on pages 31-33. It details what he's done over the years and currently, particularly with bags of leaves covering the dormant hostas in the ground.

Bob Olson lives in Minnesota; I live in southeast Pennsylvania near Philadelphia. Winters are colder, more severe where Bob lives than where I reside. My hostas are in containers on my balcony, receiving no weather protection other than shredded hardwood mulch filling void spaces in the containers, which are sites where water could collect and be in contact with frozen hosta crowns and roots resulting in rot.

Two overwintering studies will be in 2021-2022 winter: Bob's and mine. They are in markedly different regions of North America. In the July or October 2022 *GO HOSTAS!* column, I plan to review results of these studies. Maybe there will be enough information for a general Hostadom protocol on overwintering.



HOME IRRIGATION SYSTEMS:

Pluses, minuses and more

It's time for *GO HOSTAS!* to have an encompassing article on IRRIGATION SYSTEMS. If you have a pop-up sprinkler, drip-tube or other "automatic" watering system in your garden, either commercially installed, DIY or both, I'd appreciate your contacting me at giboshiwip@aol.com.

GO HOSTAS!





Book Notice

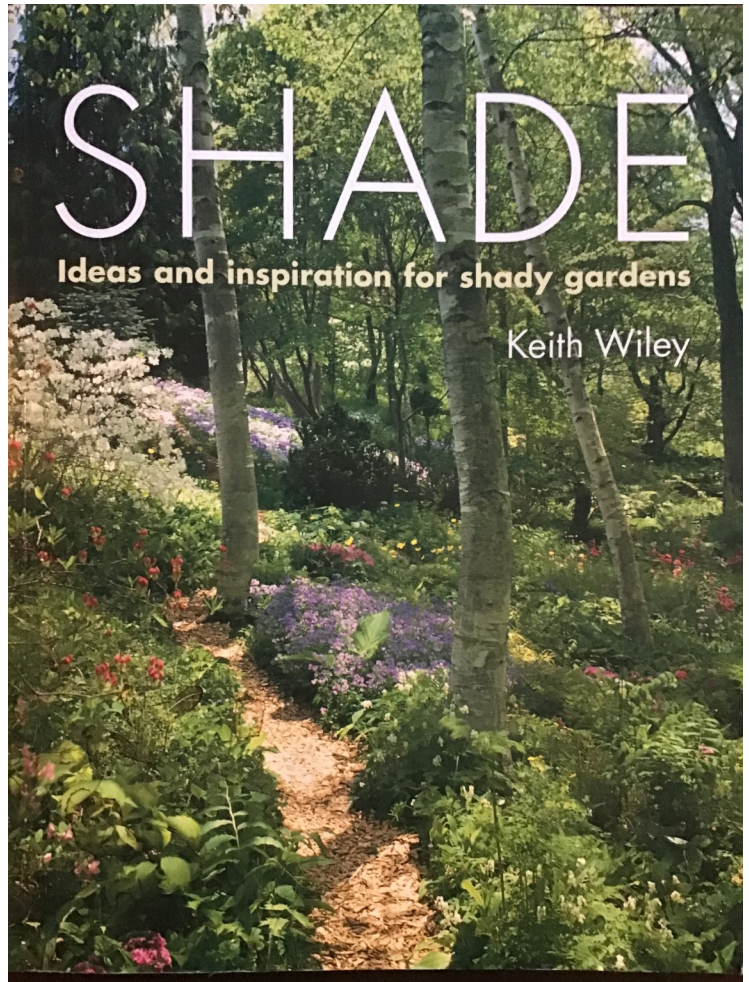
Clyde Crockett, Carmel, IN

SHADE -Ideas and inspirations for shady gardens

Written by Keith Wiley

Published by Timber Press, Inc.: 2007

Our Notice begins with the section ‘Wild Woodland Shade’ and the introduction of a word for plants that prefer shade—woodlanders. We are invited to visit a woodland, be it a forest or a like place with lots of trees. Of most importance is that this wild woodland is imbued with shade. We see or imagine what is growing there and what plantings would look good growing there, taking account of the soil and tree roots and such, but always aware in some way of the shade. Initially, I was somewhat puzzled by why this section was included but came to realize that although this is surely a “gardening” book, it is mainly about what is epitomized in the opening sentence:



“A garden without shade is incomplete, somehow diminished of the magic that dappled light and dark shadows bring to even the most mundane of sites.”

What we have here is a panegyric to shade; that condition which Wiley aptly notes is the catalyst of that “childlike anticipation” that we, as hosta lov-

ers, feel in those cherished moments in spring when we see the buds begin to emerge.

After a visit to some tantalizing woodlands from California to Scotland, we stop next at the ‘Country Garden’. This term is used to mean a large garden area where one is not restricted by neighboring houses, outbuildings, fences, and other restrictive and confining obstacles. Free rein reigns and one can do a lot of interesting things such as creating a naturalistic garden, a recreation of the natural world or one (certainly one close to our hearts) to incorporate a particular plant *en masse*. Hostas anyone?

Few of us have our own woodland or country garden. We are more at-home in ‘Urban Retreats’, defined as what is familiar to most of us: “private gardens in built-up areas”. In this section there is helpful advice and illustrations on constructing with plants what is virtually another room adjacent to the dwelling, or perhaps creating a sanctuary. The use of hard-surfacing is amply covered here as well as in a separate section, ‘Hard Landscaping’. Here we find information on using water, various forms of mulching and a delightful part on inspirational ideas from Japanese gardens. Not to be skipped is ‘Vertical Elements’ featuring the use of pergolas, tree trunks, and designer fences for not only interesting vistas but also for shade.

The bulk of the book consists of 100 pages of ‘Plants For Shady Gardens’ that part of a gardening book that many readers (like me!) turn to first. Here there is more than an alphabetical listing of shade-tolerant plants but sections on ‘Shady Plants In Nature’, ‘Creating Shade’, ‘Planting In Shade’ which includes the use of containers and raised beds, and a section titled ‘Combining Shade-Lovers’, which principally deals with what plants grow in varying shady conditions, from light to dense. This part ends with a ‘Plant Directory’, divided into sections on trees and shrubs, perennials, bulbs, grasses, and ferns. Hostas are of course included but without a listing of selected varieties. There is a well-done index which is always nice to have.

The photographs are not only numerous but beautiful and, in many cases, breathtaking. What is most striking and what recommends this book so

highly is the writing. Here one finds brilliantly crafted prose, a classic ode, in this case, to shade. The author, a celebrated author, plantsman, and garden creator, is to be congratulated on this addition to the horticultural literature.

Happy Gardening,

Clyde



“Hostas at The Garden House, Devon “



In Memoriam: *Jeff Miller*

By Rod Kuenster

Jeff Miller (Jeffrey Allen Miller) Born July 14, 1960 passed away on November 7, 2021 in Milton Wisconsin (from a battle with cancer) where he lived with wife Penny (who passed away 9 days later), who had battled Huntington's disease for years. Jeff was survived by two children Andy and Ashley and mother-in-law Benita Wilson, who was very close to Jeff and Penny and helped Jeff for years with Penny's care as well as being his #1 transplanter of hostas.

Jeff was owner and (hard worker) of The Land of the Giants Hosta Farm, where he was so proud of his gardens he spent as much time as he could making new beds and always re-doing hosta beds as needed. I met Jeff years ago when he was first getting started with the nursery.



Jeff Miller, Bev Stegeman, Rod Kuenster, Owen Purvis at Bevs, 2011 (Photo by Rod Kuenster)

Jeff was always digging information out of me as to how to grow hosta from seed. As you know he was a person who was all about “Go Big or Go Home”. The nursery soon filled to the brim with new hosta introductions as well as

a few large seedling beds. Jeff had a true passion for hosta and read about and learned all he could about this plant we call the “Friendship Plant”. I was always amazed how he could ID a hosta from a leaf or picture. He always had new ideas for hosta beds, and he would run these plans by me.



Rod Kuenster, Olga Petryszyn, Jeff Miller, Owen Purvis at Olgas 2011 (Photo by Rod Kuenster)



Jeff Miller at Hosta Seed Growers Show 2014 (Photo by Rod Kuenster)

I was always amazed by the amount of work he would plan for and get done. His mail order business was very over whelming, and I never knew how he could dig, pack and ship so many orders. We started talking about doing Tissue Cultures together for a few years, before he jumped in with that “Go Big” mentality and got that started up. I planted tens of thousands of tiny little TC’s over the years with Jeff and we always had plenty of fun during these planting times.

“Go Big or Go Home” reminds me of a funny story; So here’s how it went: Since The Land of the Giants first hosta introduction was called *H. ‘Giantland Sunny Mouse Ears’* which of course is a mini not a giant. So I

started calling him owner of “The Land of the Minis” instead of Land of the Giants, so “Go Big” became “Go Mini” all in good fun of course between us good buddies.

We had many laughs and took many hosta trips together we also spent many hours talking and looking at hosta seedlings dreaming about and comparing our dreams about how we could change a seedling with the next few years by making select crosses.

Jeff shared his passion about hosta with many people that he met over the years, and since he never met a hosta or hosta person he did not like, he soon was considered by many as one of the largest hosta nurseries in the U.S., as well as one of the most knowledgeable hosta people around.



Jeff Miller and Rod Kuenster in Jeff's TC grow room 2017 (Photo by Rod Kuenster)

Jeff was a member of the Wisconsin Hosta Society and he was involved with the American Hosta Society, Midwest Hosta Society, Hosta College and the Hosta Seed Growers group with the vending of hosta and giving talks to many groups about hosta.

Jeff will be missed in the hosta world, and I am so glad that we became best buddies and had many years of sharing the passion of hosta. I think about giving him a call everyday to see what he thinks about a cross I am thinking of making. So, I now try and think of what he would tell me or share a picture of my favorite seedling (that day any way).

News from the AHS Auction Chair...

All,

On-line Auction 2022: Looking Ahead Get Ready!

Late November may seem an odd time to be thinking about sub-zero temps and cabin fever activities coming up in January of 2022 ... WRONG! There is no better time than now to take inventory, make note, and plan donations for the AHS On-line Auction. This event is the second largest fundraiser for the society each year. Donors provide a description of plant material, seed, or garden related items and a digital photo. Each item is posted in an easy-to-use auction format. Need help with description or photo ... we are happy to assist where and when we can.

The twenty-sixth American Hosta Society Online Auction is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, January 16 to Saturday, January 29, 2022.

Each year the AHS On-line Auction is held in mid-January. News is distributed via email notices, society publications, and upon the AHS website. Have a friend that is new to this event or did not get this message; forward this email to them so they may request that their address be added to the mailing group by the chair, Don Dean, Changed your service provider or have a new, additional email address that you prefer I use? Be sure to send this news to me as well.

More information will be coming later. ***Planning for possible donations*** is even more time critical. I have assistance with writing up some descriptions prior to January. Jojo joins us again. Any donations sent prior to then helps greatly to be prepared and conduct the auction. Keep in mind not all participants are advanced hosta buffs. Anything that once tweaked your interest or tweaks it now will grab someone else's interest! Of course, rare or new intros are always showstoppers, collections work as well, and interesting combos that look great planted together also work. Give it a thought and consider joining in on the fun and entertainment when the plant world can seem to have stopped!

On-line Auction Chair

Don Dean



Hybridizer Corner . . .

Featured Hybridizer: *Doug Beilstein*

During the initial stages of establishing the Blueberry Patch, a u-pic blueberry growing farm, my brother Steve and I ventured to Wade and Gatton's farm just south of us. We were looking for some side income in selling annuals and perennials in the spring. Van Wade sold us some hosta and showed us how to divide them. He mentioned hybridizing as an interesting hobby. I planted some OP seeds from a few plants that were left over. It was a disaster as only a few germinated out of 1000's of seeds planted. About that same time, I saw an article about seeds for sale. Pete Ruh was the seller. After calling and writing him I purchased several packets of his seeds. Eureka, success!!!!!! And as they say, "the seed was planted or the bug was hatched".

When not in the office seeing patients or at the farm tending to the blueberry/greenhouse business I was always in the back 40 nursing the now voluminous collection of hosta. Streakers were a premium, but they were secured too. *Hosta* 'Neat Splash', 'Sea Prize', 'Sea Sunrise' and 'Galaxy' to name a few. *H.* 'Swoosh', 'Little Jim' and 'Yellow Splash' were in the mix. I should note here that early on I met Mary Chastain, a remarkable woman, whose hybridizing is widely acknowledged. Numerous discussions with her, plus several trips to her home, let alone some of her breeders, greatly enriched my hybridizing experience.

Early on I made a conscious choice to go with the shotgun philosophy rather than with limited type crosses. I chose to go with as many different crosses on a single plant rather than concentrate just a few pollens with many pollinations. In other words, a few seeds per many crosses rather than a lot of seeds in a few crosses. The thinking at the time said you can get the best out of a cross with about 40 seeds. I was looking for something 'different' and I thought I had a better chance with more partners. I still

continue that method to this day.

Over the years (I started in 1980's) my hybridizing has taken me in many different directions. Early on splashed plants didn't seem to lead to anything spectacular, so different leaf shapes and edges were where all the excitement went. Ruffles using *H. 'Elvis Lives'* and 'Lakeside Ruffles' along with 'Neptune' and others produced great new plants. Corrugation was big at one time so 'Clearfork River Valley' and 'Iroquois' were brought into the program. Splashed plants made a comeback with 'Victory' and 'Tsugara Komachi'. Long bladed leaves in the [*H. kikutii*](#) and *H. 'Mikawa-no-yuki'* fashion certainly made an impression on my program. Then again, the splashed plants, the wide bordered plants appeared. Those pure white and cream edged plants started to gain in popularity.

Along the way I saw that we only had lab derived tetraploid hostas (excepting *H. ventricose*). While an extremely attractive plant (the colors are more intense) tetraploids were brittle in the garden and only of the 'Patriot' heart shaped leaf form. Crossing almost every available tet. out there, I started to get my own hybrids. Complicating this were the identified partial tets. Not having flow cytometry available I am not sure of my final results but if I crossed a known tet. (tested) with another known tet. (tested) I should get a resulting tet. (not tested). Next, I crossed my F1's of different crosses to get F2's. I was getting hybrids that had four known different tet. grandparents! To me that was my breakthrough as I have developed more flexibility in the plants and the leaf shape is morphing toward elongation. I also have fragrance, derived out of 'Mojito', in several different cultivars.

Good fortune struck as a great friend, Owen Purvis, gave me a plant that was splashed and he believed to be a tetraploid. His garden name was FOLT, *H. 'Flash of Light Tetraploid'*. I have had more fun with that plant than you can shake a stick at! It loves to breed to other tets. While that is not proof of its genetics it is somewhat indicative of it. I have dispersed seed of FOLT and its many offspring around the US and to Europe. FOLT went to the auction block during the most recent AHS Convention Auction and brought a handsome price. Jeff Moore, a fellow hybridizer, has jumped

into the tetraploid field but few others here in the states have. Christina Brinkman, of Germany, has really engaged the tets. in Europe. I believe they are truly an undeveloped part of the hybridizing adventure.

I must mention Bob Solberg. Without his interest, supportive help and encouragement, let alone introducing my registered cultivars, I would have faded away long ago.

Now my real challenge in hybridizing comes. In our glory years (lol), Mardy and I have relocated to a condo in Dublin, Ohio. My hybridizing has now changed from one location to three with a salute to my European friends who have shown us we can do a lot with less. I am gradually moving away from splashed plants as they take longer to develop. I will still grow my seeds in our new basement (a prerequisite for the condo - lol). Currently I have over 40 trays growing this winter! The hybridizing will be done in a hoop house (15 minutes away) graciously 'loaned' to me by the owner of a wholesale nursery, George Pealer, where my younger daughter is employed. The seedlings will now for the most part be grown in trays or gallon pots until deemed worthy of a limited space in raised beds, still in Mansfield, Ohio (1 hour away!).

It should make for interesting travels with eager anticipations. However, all of the grandkids are but an arm's length away!



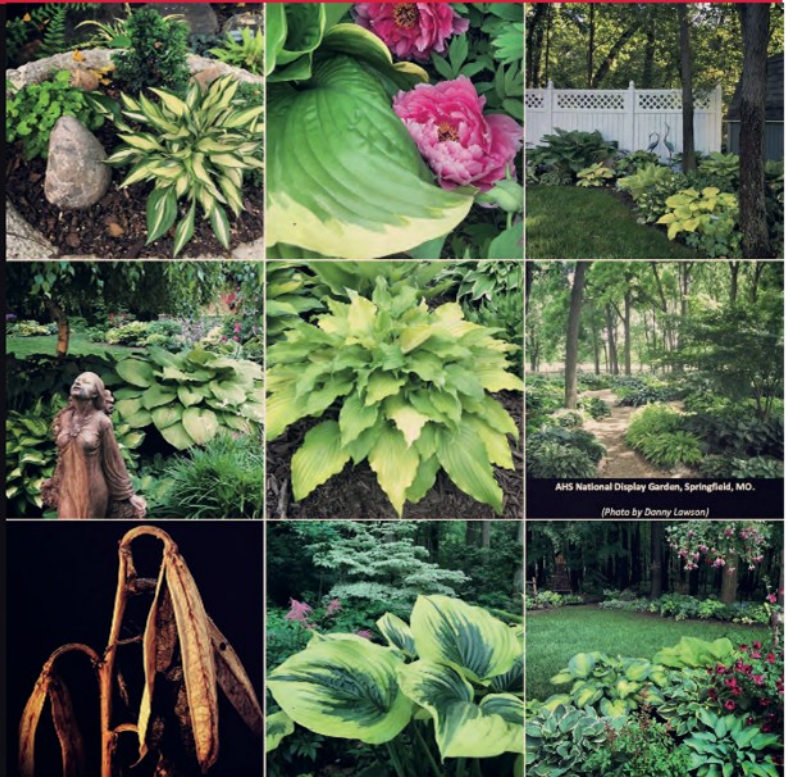
Some of Doug's un-named seedlings.

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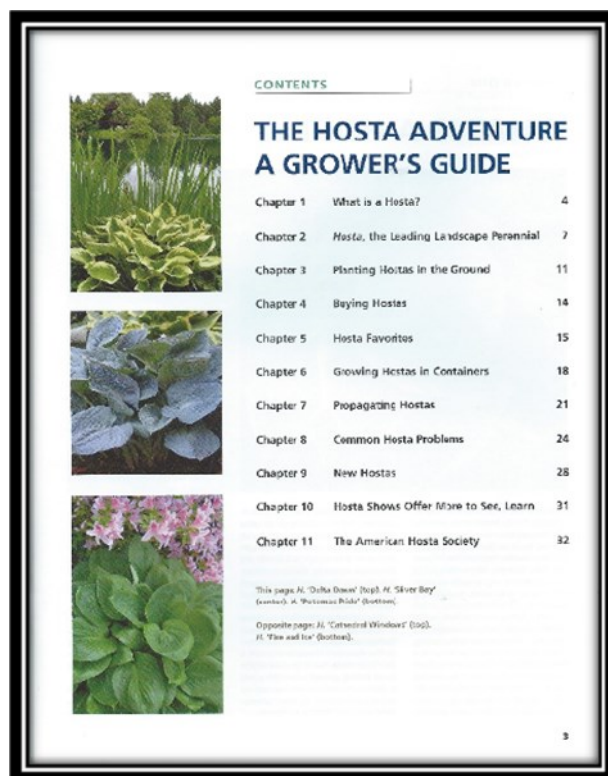
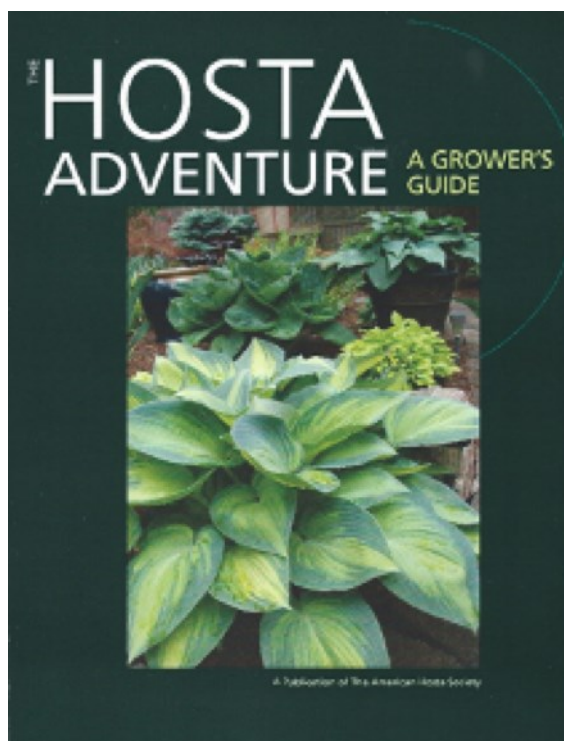
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From AHS Publications

The Hosta Adventure, Third Edition, contains a wealth of information about growing hostas. First published in 2001, *The Hosta Adventure* was intended as a guide for novices, but it appealed to all levels of hosta gardeners. The first two editions were popular additions to the libraries of new and seasoned gardeners. Now a new Adventure beckons.

This new edition of *The Hosta Adventure* is updated with the latest information including buying, planting, and growing hostas.



There is a chapter on growing hostas in containers. Common problems encountered in hosta culture with solutions to these common problems is included. For those interested in propagation, information on division of plants, bud cutting, and the Ross method is included.

If you are new to hostas, a chapter on hosta favorites gives you an idea of hostas to acquire that are viewed as good plants by other hosta growers. A chapter on new hostas, including sports and seedlings is informative.

A list of popular hosta books that you may want to add to your library is given, as is information on hosta shows, and information on how to link up with fellow hosta growers by joining The American Hosta Society.

This publication should be part of every hosta grower's library.

Order *The Hosta Adventure—A Grower's Guide - 3rd Edition*

\$4.00 + \$2.50 postage for members or \$5.50 + \$2.50 postage for non-members



The Hosta Adventure is filled with stunning photos of hostas and hosta gardens.

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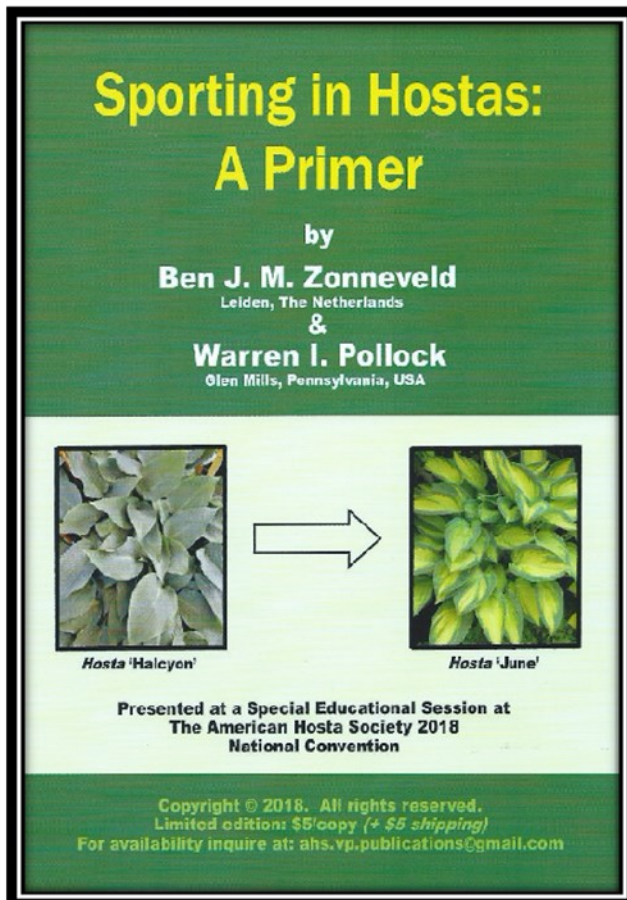
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Hosta Adventure
1104 Oxford Court
Oakbrook Terrace IL 60181**

From AHS Publications



Ben J. M. Zonneveld and Warren I. Pollock have researched and written a booklet about sporting in hostas. Based on nearly ten years of research, this 28-page booklet describes the process of sporting.

Sporting in Hostas: A Primer, was compiled by Dr. Pollock. He gave a presentation at the American Hosta Society (AHS) National Convention held in Philadelphia in 2018, highlighting the major points contained in this publication.

Hosta enthusiasts interested in how and why hostas mutate, or sport, have found this source book of great value. Dr. Pollock, along with the late Gregg Peterson, Past President of the American Hosta Society, and one other donor funded the printing of this booklet and generously donated these booklets to the AHS.

All proceeds from the sale of *Sporting in Hostas* go to the general fund of the AHS, to further its educational goals.

This booklet outlines the basic principles of sporting, explaining the three layers of cells that are contained in the meristem or apical dome in the shoot of the hosta plant. He explains the chromosomal makeup of hostas, and the concept of ploidy, or the number of sets of chromosomes in the cell nucleus. The difference between sports and hybrids is covered.

The eleven (11) sporting rules in hostas are presented, including examples of each. Also, examples of unusual sporting with photos of many of the examples are presented. An appendix contains selective slides from Warren's presentation at the National Convention.

A second appendix provides some hosta sporting statistics compiled by Hugo Phillips, founder and custodian of the “MyHostas” website. For those inclined to study this process further, a final appendix lists resources for additional reading.

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While some elements are rather technical, Warren walks the reader through this fascinating process of change in hostas with plenty of photos and practical examples. The reader will come away with new knowledge of how hostas change to produce new and interesting plants.

This valuable resource is available only from the American Hosta Society.

You may order your copy from AHS Publications by mailing a check payable to *The American Hosta Society* in the amount of \$10.00 (postage paid) to:

**Barry Ankney, AHS Publications Sales
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AHS Membership



The American Hosta Society (AHS) is a society dedicated to the study and improvement of the genus *Hosta* and the dissemination of general and scientific knowledge about hostas. There are numerous benefits for the members that result from these efforts, both social and in nursery trade. All AHS members receive several publications a year, including two colorful issues of *The Hosta Journal* (mailed), four *eNewsletters* (emailed), along with *The Online Hosta Journal* (posted on the web for members only).

These *Journals* include articles on cultivation tips, propagation techniques, landscape uses, new cultivars and old species, pioneers and personalities, scientific advances, convention awards, gardens, and news about the AHS.

Membership provides an opportunity to attend national meetings and conventions, which offer educational and scientific presentations, garden tours, judge's clinics, and a chance to see the latest and best hostas in the hosta show.

Other membership benefits:

- ✓ The privilege of visiting display gardens throughout the country, many of which are only open to AHS members.
- ✓ An invitation to exhibit your favorite hostas and compete for recognition in various AHS national and regional hosta shows.
- ✓ Developing friendships with people who share an interest in growing hostas.
- ✓ Access to Members Only section of the AHS website.

Another benefit of becoming a new member is you receive a voucher from the AHS Membership Secretary good for \$15.00 towards any purchase at sponsoring nurseries. For information about this program, go to:

<http://www.americanhostasociety.org/Membership/AHSVoucherProgram.htm>

Print and mail the Membership Application form on the next page, or to join online, go to:

<http://www.americanhostasociety.org/Membership/Membership.htm>

American Hosta Society



Photo by Don Rawson

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