



# The American Hosta Society

January 2023

*eNewsletter*



***H. 'Ebb Tide'***

**E. Elslager 1997**

*(Photo by Mary Vertz)*

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# President's Message

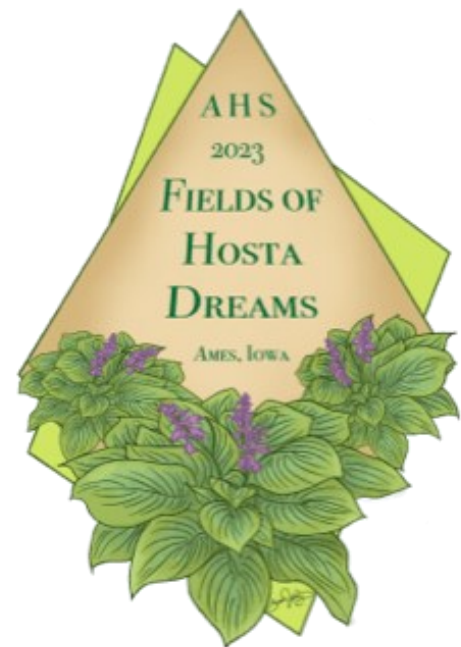
Andy Marlow, Hopkins, MN

**Happy New Year** to all you hostaholics! It's wonderful to belong to an organization that loves and supports the Friendship Plant. In this new year, and subsequent years, you will see an emphasis on that phrase from the American Hosta Society: the Friendship Plant. It's all part of our new branding strategy. You'll read more about it in the printed *The Hosta Journal* that you have either just received or will receive shortly.

Looking back at this past year, one great highlight and one great lowlight are in my memory. The highlight was the first in-person AHS convention since 2019. We in the Minnesota Hosta Society were delighted to play host to just over 300 people and show off the fantastic gardens of our members. It was very special to see all our hosta friends not on a Zoom screen, but in the flesh!

The lowlight, of course, was the passing of my dear friend and true champion of the Friendship Plant, Dr. Bob Olson. We had been friends for nearly 40 years and I often described him as my personal hosta guru. He taught me about hostas and shared plants from his own garden with me (as he did with many others). One year I became enamored with *Hosta* 'Blueberry Waffles' but was too cheap to pay the going price. My son took pity on me and gave me one for Father's Day. I left it to over-winter outdoors in a pot and managed to kill it. Hearing my tale of woe (and malfeasance), Bob appeared on my doorstep that spring with an even larger specimen from his collection. That was in the true spirit of the Friendship Plant.

The other thing we do at the turn of the year is look forward. I am particularly looking forward to two in-person hosta events, and it turns out both are within easy driving distance. The national convention, whose theme is Field of Hosta Dreams, is in Ames, Iowa, June 7-10. By the time you see this the discounted early registration fee will have expired, but regular registration is still a bargain. Our hosts, the Russ O'Hara Hosta Society, has some spectacular gardens lined up and a nice array of speakers from the usual suspects to the uniquely specialized. You can check it all out at [www.hostaconvention.org](http://www.hostaconvention.org).





A brief aside: until now, every convention sponsor has had to engage their own website host and create their own website. At their meeting last June, the AHS Board of directors decided to create and pay for a website that could be used by each convention as it occurred. No more reinventing the wheel each year, and AHS pays for it!

An even briefer aside: I have been an AHS member for more than 20 years and have dutifully typed in [www.americanhostasociety.org](http://www.americanhostasociety.org) every time I wanted to view our website. Just last summer I was let in on the secret. Just type in [hosta.org](http://hosta.org) and you'll end up at the same place!

The second in-person gathering I'm really looking forward to is the Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention in Rochester, Minnesota, July 13-15, hosted by the Shades of Green Hosta Society of Southeastern Minnesota. The first hosta convention I ever attended was a Midwest Regional in Rochester that I was dragged to (he'd say encouraged to attend) by Bob Olson. I was hooked after that. I have visited a number of the gardens that will be on tour several times. The tours will be spectacular.

Speaking of Rochester; I have appointed Cindy Tomashek of Rochester to be chair of the AHS nominating committee. She will be ably assisted by Mike Greanya and Harold McDonnell in putting forward candidates for AHS officers for the election to be held at the Ames convention. I am term-limited as President, so after the election I will hold the very best position on any Board of Directors, Immediate Past President.

The other major appointment to announce is that I have finally been able to fill the position of Vice President Genus Hosta with an extremely qualified candidate. Don Dean of Ramsey, Minnesota, has graciously agreed to serve at least until the convention. Don is a noted hybridizer, the 2016 winner of the Eunice Fisher Distinguished Hybridizer Merit Award, and President of AHS from 2013-2017.

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## What can you expect at the nation's largest hosta convention?

- A First Inning welcome reception with better-than ballpark hospitality, including live music and a light dinner
- Bases-loaded garden tours
- Out-of-the-park educational sessions
- Home Run AHS sanctioned Hosta Show
- Batter-up Hosta auction
- Big League 'Hostatality' social events
- Vendors! And we don't mean peanuts





# Hostas and Associates

Glenn Herold, Cedarburg, WI

## Christmas Cactus is just one of the Holiday Trio

You may wonder what this article has to do with hostas. Well, nothing, but as we await the emergence of our favorite outdoor plant, why not get your fingers dirty with an indoor plant? Here's an easy one for you to try.

The family of cacti, called the Cactaceae, is a very diverse group, consisting of about 127 genera and over 1700 known species. They occur in a wide range of shapes, sizes and environments. Though we usually think of them as arid plants, some grow naturally in humid environments. Cacti are a subgroup of plants known as succulents, all of which have thickened, fleshy parts that are adapted to store water. Most cacti have lost true leaves, which allows them to minimize water loss. An exception is a group of 15 species of the genus *Epiphyllum*, known as the orchid cacti. They are tropical plants native to Central and South America that are mostly epiphytic, meaning that they grow on other plants.

Christmas cactus, and its close relatives the Thanksgiving cactus and Easter cactus, may look like it has leaves, but the leaf-like structures are actually flattened stems. The three are sometimes referred to as Holiday cacti. Their names are derived from the approximate time of year in which they bloom. All are native to Brazil, where they are found growing on trees or rocks in tropical or subtropical moist forests.

A good way to distinguish between the three species, all of which are members of the genus *Schlumbergera*, is to look at the shape of the stem segments. Those of Thanksgiving cactus have very pointed, claw-shaped projections on the stem edges. Christmas cactus has scalloped projections, while Easter cactus has rounded edges. A significant amount of variation is found in Christmas cactus because it is probably a hybrid of the other two.

The Holiday cacti are what are considered short day plants. They require approximately 13 hours of darkness each day for from six to 12 weeks in which to flower. Thanksgiving cacti require the shortest length while Easter cacti require the longest. Cool temperatures during this time are also an aiding factor. Flowers form in the notches of the stem segments or at the tips. The fuchsia-like flowers may vary from white to purple, with the most variation being found in the Christmas cactus. Flowers are up to three inches long with six to eight tepals, a term used by botanists for the outer parts of the flower that can't be classified as either petals or sepals. The outer tepals are shorter and bent backwards. Inner tepals are larger and fused at the base to form a floral tube. Nectar is produced at the base of the tube. In the wild, Holiday cacti

are pollinated by hummingbirds.

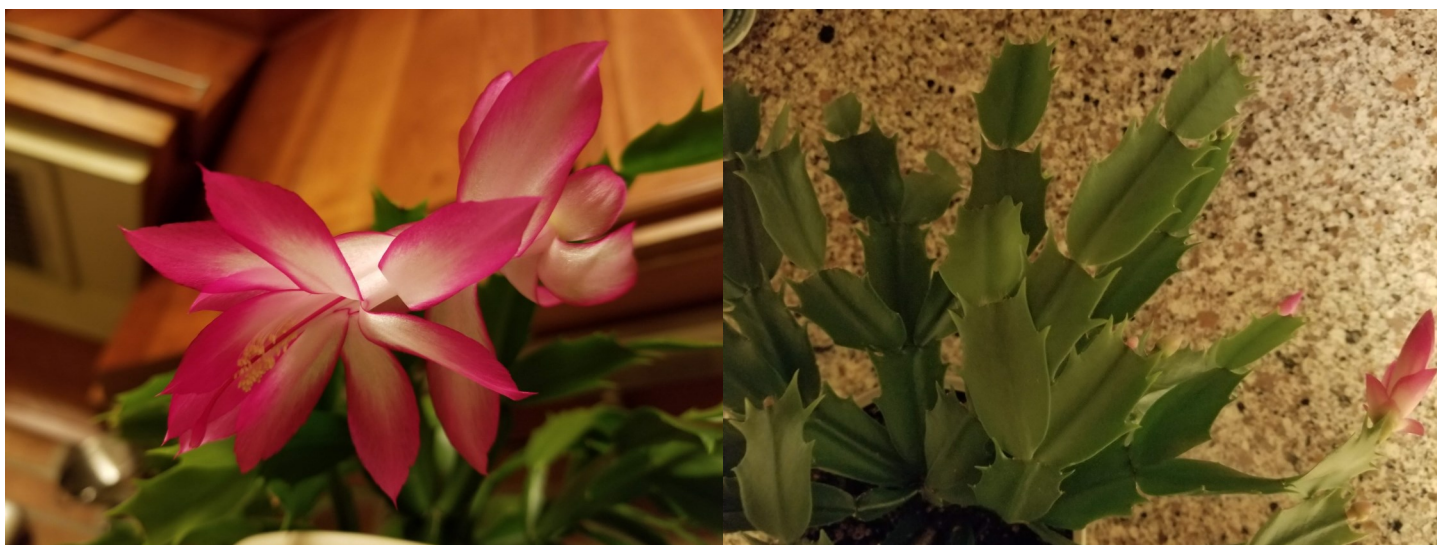
Holiday cacti require bright, but not direct, light. When we first received our Thanksgiving cactus, which our daughter Holly propagated from a plant that she grows, we placed it in a south window. My wife, Terry, noticed after a short time that the foliage was off-color and the plant was not growing well, so she moved it to a north-facing window. Since then, it has thrived. Overwatering can be fatal to Holiday cacti. Let the top inch to two of potting mix completely dry out before watering. Terry waters our plant every two to three weeks. They thrive more when grown in a clay pot rather than a glazed or plastic pot. While the plant is in bloom, do not fertilize or repot it. Fertilize it only when the plant is actively growing. Holiday cacti prefer to be root-bound.

Holiday cacti are easy to root from cuttings. Stick a piece into sterile, well-drained potting mix or vermiculite and soon it will form roots. It's a great plant to share with friends or family members. Don't wait until next Christmas to obtain your own and to share it with others.

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*Additional articles on plants and gardening can be found on my blog:*

<https://TheCottageGardener53012.Wordpress.com>



Flowers and foliage of *Schlumbergera truncata*, the Thanksgiving cactus



# GO HOSTAS!

Warren I. Pollock, Glen Mills, PA

## GO HOSTAS!

### THE POPULAR USE OF GARLIC TO DETER SLUGS AND SNAILS IN THE UK

by John Baker and June Colley  
Lindford, Hampshire, England  
Photos by John Baker

June Colley was the long-time inspirational editor of the British Hosta and Hemerocallis Society's biannual *Journal*. She now is editor of BHHS's new exciting publication *The Hosta and Daylily MESSENGER*. John Baker, her partner, is BHHS Secretary. Their garden, "Narra," in a quaint village some 50 miles south-southwest of London, has over 1300 hostas on display. Narra is Hostadom-famous for its imaginative and unique "Hanging Hosta Garden" planted with hundreds of plants in plastic pots sitting on vertical poles mounted on the sides of their residence. Additionally, June has a collection, of *H. 'Blue Mouse Ears'* sports started in 2004. There are 51 named varieties in a special garden called "MouseLandia." In the latest *BHHS Journal*, she comprehensively detailed their survival — *which wasn't always good* — and their persistent misbehavior (such-as reversion looking like their parents) — *which was fairly often*. A *Hosta* historian, June has scholarly reported on the genus from extensive travels in Japan, China, South and North Korea, the Balkan countries, Russia and U.S. She's attended the recent AHS national conventions.

Slugs and snails were once listed by the RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) among the top ten garden pests in the UK. Our damp climate and mild winters provide the perfect conditions for the molluscs to proliferate in gardens and agricultural plots.

Slugs and most snails are hermaphroditic, meaning they carry both male and female reproductive organs, so both mating slugs are capable of laying eggs, which are ready to hatch in two to four weeks in mild weather. In autumn, they will hatch after more than a month. Egg-laying can be repeated several times a year.

Most slugs become mature in a few months and can start laying eggs ranging in number from 10-80, with the eggs laid in autumn being capable of overwintering in milder winters. The common field slug, *Deroceras reticulatum*, can feed in temperatures as low as 0 °C (32 °F) and burrow deep into the ground. It is known in research studies that slugs live for up to six years or longer. The other common slugs include representative species of the genus *Arion*, with *A. vulgaris* being considered the worst species found in Europe.





The UK and the EU have mainly been reliant on the use of metaldehyde pellets to control slugs and snails until it was banned in March 2022. Alternatives containing ferric phosphate pellets are now widely used, but the \$5.68 per half pound price tag is prohibitively expensive for those with a large collection of susceptible plants, such as hostas. Those brands with the chelating agent EDTA removed, seemed less effective.



Dr. Gordon Port *et al.* were looking for environmentally friendly and cost-effective alternatives that could be used in small-scale gardens as early as 2003. In research conducted at the University of New Castle Upon Tyne, it was found that commercial extracts of garlic oil kill slugs and snails when applied directly. When sprayed on foliage, allicin, an alkaloid, sulfur-containing compound in garlic, repels slugs and has been observed to kill some slug eggs in the soil. Allicin is one of the chemicals that gives garlic its smell and taste, and it emits the pungent volatile hydrogen sulfide.

There are also non-sulfur-containing compounds associated with the garlic aroma, some of which are formed after the heating and ageing process. Dodds and Henderson (1994-1997) reported other chemical compositions of garlic that also include saponins (4.3%) and tannins (4.8%). The use of plants containing these groups of compounds is widespread in the third world and developing countries in the eradication and control of slugs and snails. Garlic has been used as a companion plant for crops for over 100 years.

British gardeners have been diligent in making their own concoctions of garlic in water, but there are alternative formulations that include using crushed garlic steeped in oil and with liquid soap added to use as a spray. There are many household formulations of garlic spray in circulation with varying concentrations of garlic to deter slugs and snails. It is best to find stronger varieties of garlic, such as the Red Done, where these are available.



In our garden, we have been using a garlic recipe as a deterrent for some years. Our experiments proved that a home-made concentration is insufficient to kill slugs and snails. Heating is known to destroy alliinase (source of organosulfur compounds) enzyme activity, but this component can be partially preserved by allowing the crushed garlic to stand for ten minutes prior to heating to prolong the shelf life of the garlic solution. An unheated, freshly made garlic solution is good, but it does not keep for very long.

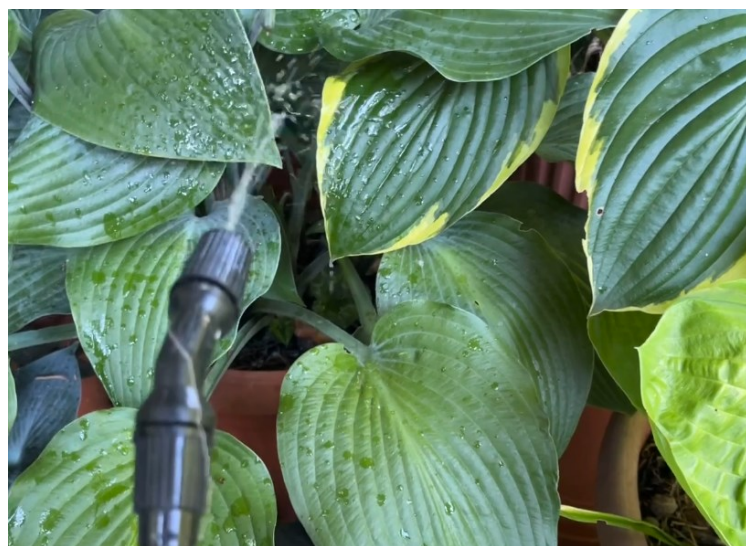
In 2013 Dr. D. Hodgson and his team at the University of Exeter found that snails can travel up to 82 feet at night, which means they can damage several plants overnight. Another interesting study conducted here in the UK by the University of Plymouth answers the question of why slugs and snails have a preference for young seedlings. The research confirmed that the selection of molluscs was based on volatile oil scents, emitted volatile organic compounds (VOCs) by seedlings, contrary to the belief that it was based on the acceptable taste of seedlings. It would be of interest to find what VOCs are emitted by hosta foliage that entice these night-time foragers.



During the annual open gardens in our village to raise money for charity, we observed hostas growing in pristine condition by a stream carpeted with wild garlic. We started growing wild garlic in pots, but a few managed to sprout in several hosta pots and there the hostas seemed to have evaded slug and snail damage. They just move on to another food source, which they can normally detect two feet away. The only disadvantage is that wild garlic is highly invasive and hard to weed out once the bulbs start to multiply.



Thankfully, we have several frogs and toads to lend a helping hand. They thrive in several water features in our garden. Also, a variety of birds live in the large 100-year-old oak trees surrounding our neighbourhood. However, we will always need our garlic spray to keep our hostas looking beautiful during the growing season.





## Here is the recipe:

**1. Take two whole bulbs of garlic; place in a plastic bag and then crush to a pulp using a rolling pin or hammer.**



**2. Empty the pulp into a pan and add a litre of water. Bring to the boil and simmer for five minutes.**



**3. Strain the juice into a jug and squeeze the pulp to remove all the garlic liquid from it.**





**4. Store this concentrated garlic juice in an airtight dark bottle or plastic container in the fridge and label the container 'Garlic'. It might be useful to put the bottle inside a sealed plastic bag so no odour escapes.**

**An alternative to garlic bulbs is dried garlic granules. These are sold by pet shops as a feed for horses to prevent insect bites. This is in fact more cost effective. Boil half a cupful in a litre of water to produce a strong concentrated juice.**

**5. Add two table-  
spoons of garlic  
juice per litre of  
water in your wa-  
tering can or spray  
bottle and apply to  
the hosta leaves  
and stems when  
the plant is not in  
bright sunlight.**



**6. Apply the spray every two weeks. You may need to apply after rain as this will wash the garlic into the soil. It is beneficial to spray other plants near to the hostas as slugs and snails often hide in other plants during the day. While the garlic juice has an odour, the garden will not smell of garlic because it is diluted in the water. The mild odour will only linger for a few hours, but the spray is efficient to repel slugs and snails.**

**Good luck!**



# UPDATE ON SLUG AND SNAIL KILLER PELLETS

By Warren I. Pollock

In March 2019 and January 2019 *GO HOSTAS!* columns, I have articles on the then-current status of commercial slug and snail killer pellets intended for home gardeners' use. Here is the 2023 update:

As previously explained, the principle active ingredients in these pellets are

- metaldehyde (an organic chemical),
- sulfur (yes, elemental S) and
- iron phosphate (likely with EDAT, a chelating agent for Fe<sup>3+</sup>).

The significant new news is that in April 2022, *in the U.K.* it became illegal to sell, supply or use slug and snail pellets containing metaldehyde *for outdoor use*. Cited was they can cause harm to birds and mammals through direct ingestion or consumption of contaminated mollusks.

U.S. and Canada have no ban - at least not yet. But a big red flag is up and strongly waving on non-use of metaldehyde in North American gardens. Metaldehyde-containing pellets are still sold by retail and wholesale nurseries and stores, especially online.

"Deadline M-Ps (Mini Pellets)" with 4% metaldehyde is available on the internet in 50 lb. bags costing ~\$50 *plus shipping expense*. Deadline M-Ps — from my experience — is the best slug and snail pellet killer for home gardens.

Also available is a product labelled "Deadline Slug and Snail Slayer". (Note word *Slayer* in the name.) These pellets contain 2% metaldehyde. Available, too, are pellets manufacture by Southern Ag company containing 3.25% metaldehyde. Both products are not as effective as Deadline M-Ps -- *but are more effective then "Sluggo"-type pellets containing iron phosphate*.

It's at least four years since the huge Scotts Miracle-Grow conglomerate — which seems to dominate the North American home market for lawn and garden chemicals and supplies — discontinued metaldehyde for home gardeners. Years ago Scotts Miracle-Grow (initially it's name was just Scott's and it principally was just a grass seed company) marketed "Ortho Bug-Geta Slug and Snail Pellets" containing 3.25% metaldehyde. That product is no longer available. However, the name was retained with significant modification along with markedly changed ingredients. Now, Scotts Miracle Grow markets a product called "Ortho Bug - Geta Slug and Snail Killer<sub>2</sub>." *This product contains no metaldehyde. Instead, it contain 1 % sulfur.*

I wondered how effective these pellets are and called Scotts Miracle-Grow at its headquarters in Marysville, Ohio. Finally after being put on hold four or five times and

having to press several numbers on my phone, I got a sales representative who would talk to me about the sulfur product. She would only say that sulfur is a well-known molluscicide, the company's technical people determined 1% sulfur was sufficient, "Killer<sub>2</sub>" is easier to apply than the old "Bug-Geta," and there is a short *YouTube* video demonstrating how to use it.

I've never used "Killer<sub>2</sub>" so I have no experience to report. If any readers have experience, I'd greatly appreciate your contacting me at [giboshiwip@aol.com](mailto:giboshiwip@aol.com) and relating what you found. Thank you. (I might have a future item in *GO HOSTAS!* if response is sufficient.)

There is nothing new that I'm aware of concerning iron phosphate-containing pellets. The primary marketer probably is Monterey Chemical Company whose product is called "Sluggo." Iron-phosphate slug and snail pellets are advertised as "Can be used around pets and wildlife."

There still is concern that these pellets may be dangerous in the garden because they contain EDTA. Reportedly EDTA is toxic to animals.



## **NEW REGISTRATION POLICY: SOME CULTIVAR REGISTRATIONS ARE NO FEE**

Last year Gayle Hartley Alley, International Registrar for the Genus *Hosta*, implemented a new AHS policy for registration fees. Now, in any calendar year there is **NO FEE** charged for the first five (5) registrations from any single registrant when using the online registration tool. Beyond five, a \$10 fee is required for each registration.

If you cannot register online, the registrar will provide registration completion for a fee of \$15 per cultivar.

*None of the old registration "forms" are acceptable after January 1, 2022.* A copy of the approved form is:



- on the final pages of *Registrations 2022* and *Registrations 2023* booklets,
- on *the Hosta Treasury* at <http://www.hostaregistrar.org/Registration/> (download the Guidelines pdf), and
- available from the registrar by emailing her a request

The registrar's address is 33001 E. 155th Street, Pleasant Hill, MO 64080-9365. Her phone number is (816) 697-2007, email address is [GiboshiGayle@gmail.com](mailto:GiboshiGayle@gmail.com).

**NOTE:** You **DO NOT** need to be an American Hosta Society member to register hostas. Registering your hostas gives international recognition to them.



## **WATER, WATER, WATER — EXCEPT IN WINTER WHEN HOSTAS ARE DORMANT**

By Bob Solberg, Green Hill Farm, Franklinton, N.C

Addendum by Warren I. Pollock

As much as hostas love water in the spring and summer, they would rather be dry in the winter. Water plays a role in the dormancy process. The usual lack of it in the fall helps bring on dormancy and the usual abundance of it in spring helps end it.

In early spring, an abundance of water will help your plants grow to large sizes. *Don't rely on rain.* You likely will need to apply water, water and yet more water.

(Addendum by WIP: I have found that large quantities of fast-acting liquid fertilizer applied in spring when air temperature is about 42 degrees F. and above helps produce big clumps. Also helpful is for the plants to get morning sun in the spring.)

# ***GO HOSTAS!***



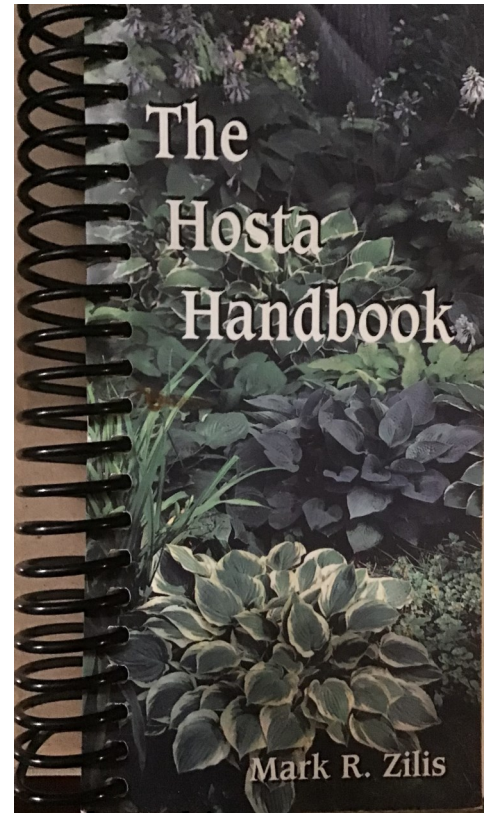
# Book Notice

Clyde Crockett, Carmel, IN

## The Hosta Handbook

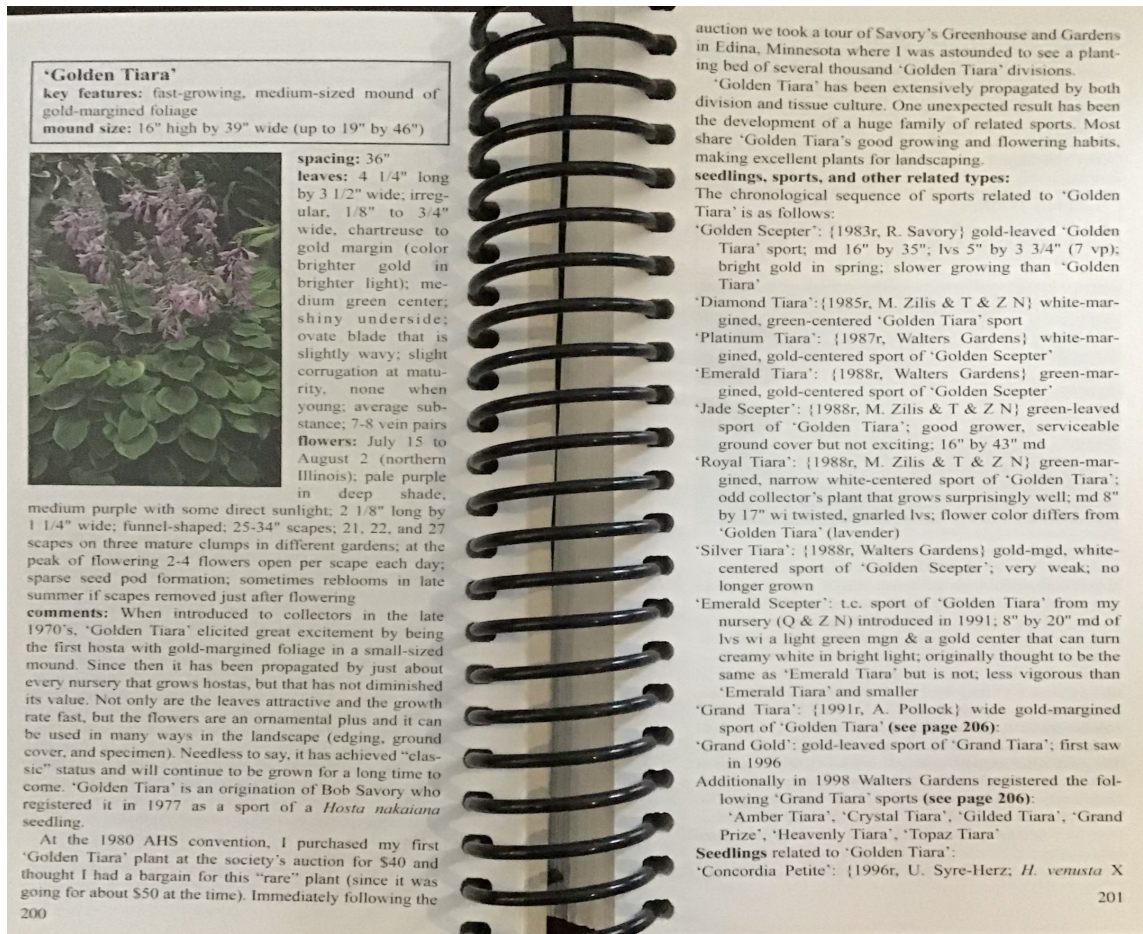
By Mark R. Zilis (Q & Z Nursery, Inc.) : 2nd Printing, February 2001)

Hosta lovers are fortunate in having such talented writers about all aspects of the genus. In the book category a standout is the multifaceted Mark Zilis whose “*Hostapedia*” and “*Field Guide to Hostas*” have been noticed here and elsewhere and have gotten the highest ratings everywhere. Other kinds of writings about hostas and related matters deserve to be noticed as well and I shall offer a few words about such but first let’s take a look at another part of the prodigious Zilis oeuvre. To many, the first things noticed will be the physical aspects of “*The Hosta Handbook*.” It is spiral-bound which allows for easy sequencing from page to page; it is compact, to make for easy toting along on your garden tours; and with laminated pages ,you can get information about that beautiful plant without the fear of soiling or dampening.



After a brief history of the genus, taxonomy is confronted, a subject as contentious as it is fascinating. Zilis has opted, wisely one might argue, to follow the lead of George Schmid in “*The Genus Hosta*” but with several important exceptions. If you want a succinct description of the history and evolution of hosta taxonomic theory, this section is required reading. After helpful sections on hosta nomenclature, and growing hostas (light, soil, fertilizers, watering, mulching, pests, diseases), we reach what I always look forward to —hosta companions. The suggestions here do not disappoint; indeed, we are given some refreshing ones new to me. You might want to read this first!

Following details on propagation, hybridization, tissue culture, and mutations, we come to Hosta Descriptions—a detailed listing of 278 hostas including key features, mound size, spacing, leaves, flowers, seedlings, sports, and other related types, all gathered over two decades by the author’s own observations, studies and methodology. Besides an accompanying excellent photo, each description includes the authors own comments which undoubtedly give “*The Hosta Handbook*” a particular dis-



"This description illustrates the depth of detail which accompanies each description"

tion. Many of these are objectively based but there are an equal number of fascinating anecdotes drawn from the close relationships Zilis had with the hybridizer/introducer and other hosta icons. The comments not only make for delightful reading but also provide valuable and irreplaceable historical information similar and in addition to the writings of Warren I. Pollock in his many articles principally published in *The Hosta Journal* and the work of William "Bill" Meyer in the Hosta Library. Alluding to my comment at the top, I hope to see more of such commentary and reminiscences published in books and in other forms. There is a lot of hosta history worth preserving, no matter how recorded. Zilis has made a notable contribution.

Usually ignored in book reviews are the table of contents and the index but the ones found here deserve special mention. They are truly of top quality and will add immensely to pleasant and rewarding reading.

This Zilis belongs on your shelf.

Happy New Year,  
 Clyde





# Hosta Happenin's

Don Rawson, Grand Rapids, MI

## ***Hosta* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ – A Very Distinct Introduction from Walters Gardens, Inc.**

Classical music. Liver and onions. Staying up late vs. getting up early. The smell of tobacco. Every person has their own likes and dislikes. It is no surprise, then, that when it comes to gardening, we do not all have the same preferences.

For example, a few of my friends are attracted to miniature hostas. Some even create magical fairy gardens. By contrast, I personally search for the largest specimens to beautify my landscape. I just think the enormous varieties are much more impressive.

And then there are people who have theme gardens – a Food Garden, an Animal Garden, or a Star Trek Garden. One of our club members has many theme gardens, even a flowerbed with the names of his children and grandchildren. I will admit that a landscape organized by themes may pique my interest for a minute or two, but I have never had the inclination to organize my own gardens topically.

The point is that we are all different (thank goodness!) and as gardeners, there are hostas that some individuals find appealing while others do not. Such will likely be the case with a new introduction from Hans Hansen of Walters Gardens – *H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’. Simply put, you will either like this one or you will not!

### **A Hosta Like None Other**

*Hosta* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ is a mutation of *H.* ‘Empress Wu’ which occurred during tissue culture production. Discovered at Walters Gardens, Inc. in March 2018, *H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ looks nothing like its parent. The sole resemblance is in name only. Reaching a diameter of 41 inches and a height of 21 inches, *H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ is a *medium-sized* hosta – much smaller than the long-standing record breaker, *H.* ‘Empress Wu’. The leaf size is reduced also, measuring 9 inches long by 6 inches wide. Scapes up to 32 inches high bare 2-inch pale lavender flowers in early summer, extending for a four-week period.

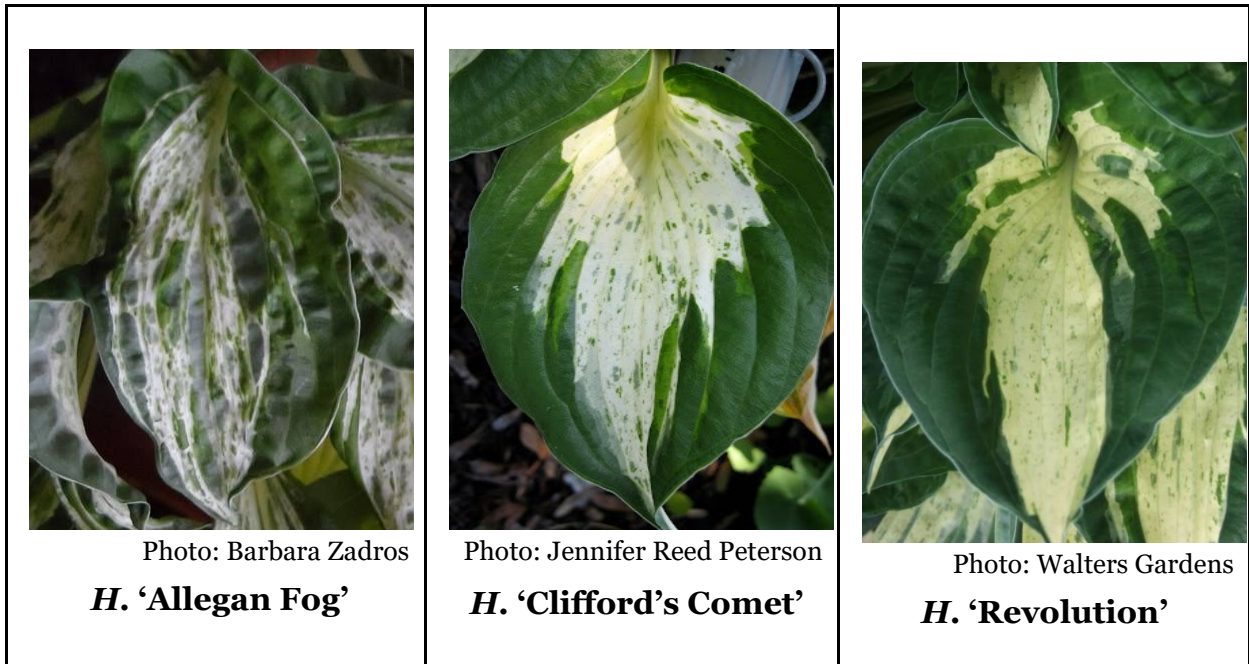


Photo by Hans Hansen

***H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’, in spring. Despite the amount of white leaf tissue, this new hosta is a reasonably good grower and holds up well in the sun.**

The most notable feature of *H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ is the unusual speckled variegation. This irregular spotting is commonly known as “grass clippings” – dark green flecks randomly sprinkled on a creamy white background. While there are other cultivars with similar speckled foliage (*H.* ‘Allegan Fog’, *H.* ‘Clifford’s Comet’, *H.* ‘Revolution’, etc.)<sup>1</sup>, few reach the dimensions of *H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’, and therefore, the others do not pack the punch that this one has in the landscape. Visitors who happen upon it while meandering along the Hosta Walk at Walters are stopped in their tracks, some shaking their heads in disbelief while others fumble for their camera.





**Most other hosta cultivars with similar speckled foliage are smaller in size.**

The other characteristic that really sets this hosta off is the remarkably wavy foliage, with each leaf folding and tapering to a long tip. Along with the grass clippings, these ruffles give *H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ more flare. The leaves of its parent are flat, almost entirely without ruffles or waves, unlike *H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’.

At this point, you may be wondering what happened in the production process to cause an all-green hosta to produce a speckled-leaved sport. Some possible explanations for this type of mutation are presented in the booklet, *Sporting in Hostas: A Primer* by Ben J. M. Zonneveld and Warren I. Pollock. Although it is not fully understood, page 5 gives four scenarios for what could have taken place. One thing is for sure: due to the large quantities of *H.* ‘Empress Wu’ produced through TC propagation, the chances for an accidental change in the DNA are significantly increased. Moreover, a succession of changes could occur in the tissue culture environment involving several intermediate steps.<sup>2</sup>



Photo from Pixabay.

**“Grass clippings,” a term used by hosta growers to describe the speckled pattern on some cultivars.**

## **The Story Behind the Name**

In the classic children's tale *Emperor's New Clothes* by Hans Christian Anderson, the clothes made for the emperor were supposed to be the finest in the land. However, two rogues had devised a mischievous plot to steal from the emperor while also showing him to be a fool. The two thieves produced the finest garments imaginable (albeit invisible), asking for the best silk and the purest gold thread. However, they put both into their own knapsacks and then pretended to work at the empty looms until late at night.

“I should like to know how the weavers are getting on with my cloth,” said the emperor to himself one day. So, he sent his trusted minister to go check on its progress. But, no one in the whole palace would admit they could not see the fine clothes for fear they would be revealed as stupid or unfit for their position. The same held true when the emperor strolled through town wearing his exquisite new clothes – until one young child with innocence and honesty stated, “The emperor has nothing on at all!”

So, why give a new hosta a story name such as this? The epithet ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ is very clever. It ties the sport to its parent and, at the same time, alludes to its immeasurable worth. At a glance, observers concur that the “best silk” and “purest thread” were summoned to adorn the plant with such stunning attire.

## **Changing Clothes – A Color Transition During the Season**

When *Hosta*. ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ emerges in spring, the foliage unfolds to expose leaves which are primarily white with a light dusting of small green particulates. As a gardener, at this point you may begin to question if a hosta with so much white would even be able to survive, since white leaf tissue has an absence of chlorophyll. Chlorophyll is the green pigment in plants which is responsible for the absorption of light to provide energy for photosynthesis.

A somewhat dramatic color change, however, is in store. This gradual transformation occurs in early summer. The dark green flecks become larger and more prevalent. As described in the Plant Patent, the foliage “matures to a minty green from tiny speckling on a white background, with patches and streaks of dark-green.” Furthermore, the dark green speckles seem to dominate the outer edges of each leaf, almost creating a margin. It is because of this transition to a greater amount of dark green that ‘*H. Emperor’s New Clothes*’ is able to grow and mature in the garden, even producing scapes, flowers and viable seed for the next generation of offspring. Some of its progeny have the same unique speckling.





Photo by Hans Hansen

**'H. Emperor's New Clothes' in summer, which becomes darker during the season as more and more speckles develop. The additional chlorophyll is crucial to its continued growth and sustainability.**

## **Shopping for the Latest in Fashion**

So, what kind of music do you like? Do you enjoy liver and onions? Are you a night owl, or an early riser? We all have different preferences. The same is true for hostas. Do you like *Hosta* 'Emperor's New Clothes'? If it rings your bell and tickles your fancy, you should add it to your wish list.

Availability from Walters Gardens, Inc. is scheduled for April/May 2024. Walters is a wholesale supplier only. Their website is at <https://www.waltersgardens.com/>. Tissue-cultured hostas are offered in trays of 72.

If you are not set up to purchase hostas in bulk from a wholesaler, my recommendation is to first check with your local nursery. Now let me say that I admire those who own and operate a greenhouse or small plant nursery. It is grueling work and the



profits are minimal. The bottom line is they need YOUR business to stay IN business. If your local supplier does not have a plant that is on your wish list, perhaps they would order it for you. In the event that you are unable to find ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ at a local source, go ahead then and place an order with your favorite mail order nursery.

As a final note, keep in mind that *H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ is protected by a Plant Patent (PP34,3312), which means that asexual propagation is prohibited unless permission is granted by the patent holder. For further information about *H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’, the registration details including additional photos can be perused on the Hosta Treasury website at <https://www.hostaregistrar.org/> .



Photo by Hans Hansen.

**First trial run of *H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’, showing the dazzling foliage. The unusual leaf variegation has proven to be quite stable.**

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All photos used with permission from the originator.

<sup>1</sup> A list of Speckled-Leaved Hostas can be found on the Hosta Lists website at <http://www.hostalists.org/> .

<sup>2</sup> Information on the mutation of *H.* ‘Empress Wu’ to *H.* ‘Emperor’s New Clothes’ per email discussion with Ben J. M. Zonneveld and Warren I. Pollock.



# And In Other Hosta News . . .

## ***The AHS Members Plant program has returned!***

Barry Ankney, Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois

We are pleased to revive this program which adds value to your membership. Be sure to renew your membership for 2023 to take advantage of this program, as only current members are eligible to participate. We are offering 600 plants to our members. The price for the AHS Members Plant is \$26.00, which includes the cost of shipment. This plant will only be available to AHS Members in 2023. We are only able to offer this plant to our members in the United States currently.



*Hosta 'Speakeasy' (Zilis, 2022)*

Here are the details. The AHS Members Plant for 2023 is *Hosta 'Speakeasy'* (Zilis, 2022). This hosta is a sport of *H. 'Powder Blue'*, a plant originated by Hajime Sugita from Japan and named and registered by his friend, Peter Ruh in 1998. It is, as its name suggests, a powdery blue, large hosta with a rippled margin.

*H. 'Speakeasy'* has the characteristics of its parent but adds an irregular yellow margin that turns creamy yellow as the season progresses. It was discovered by Mark Zilis in his tissue culture lab, A to Z Perennials. It was named by Erin Parks from Green Hill Farm. It was registered by Barry Ankney and AHS.

The AHS Members Plant is available for sale now. They are being sold on a first-paid basis. Members may send a check payable to the American Hosta Society in the amount of \$26.00 to the Membership Secretary at the address below. Alternatively, members may call the Membership Secretary with a credit card to reserve your AHS Members Plant. Orders must come from individual members so that membership can be verified.

The plant will be shipped by our grower, Hornbaker Gardens, in late April to early May 2023. The plants are being grown by Hornbaker Gardens and were looking great when I saw them this past July. Please do not contact our grower directly regarding the plant, as they cannot take orders for the plant. Orders must come through the Membership Secretary.





*Hosta 'I'll Fly Away' (McDonell, 2019)*

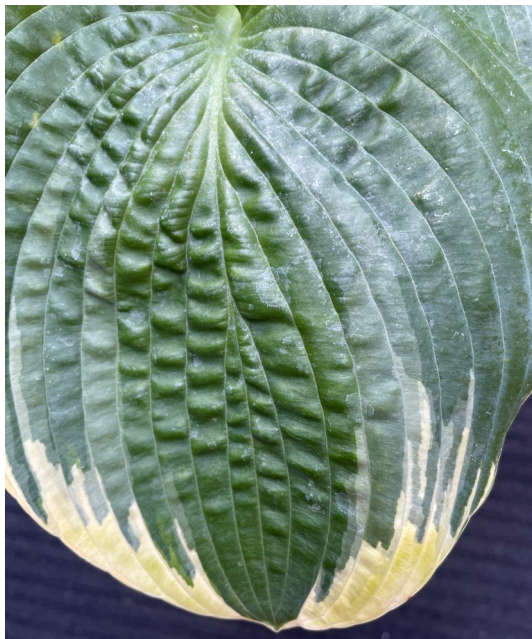
We have several other AHS Members Plants in production that will be offered in the next few years. You can anticipate that a new Members Plant will be available only to members in the coming years. The plant for 2024 will be *H. 'I'll Fly Away'* (McDonell, 2019).

Here is the contact information for ordering your AHS Members Plant:

Barry Ankney, Membership Secretary,  
1104 Oxford Court,  
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181-5249.  
Telephone 309-678-4119.

Again, orders will be taken until April 15, 2023, or until the plants are sold out.

*Together, we can make the world a more beautiful place,  
one hosta and one new friend at a time.*



*H. 'Speakeasy' leaf.*



*H. 'Fly Away' leaf and flower.*

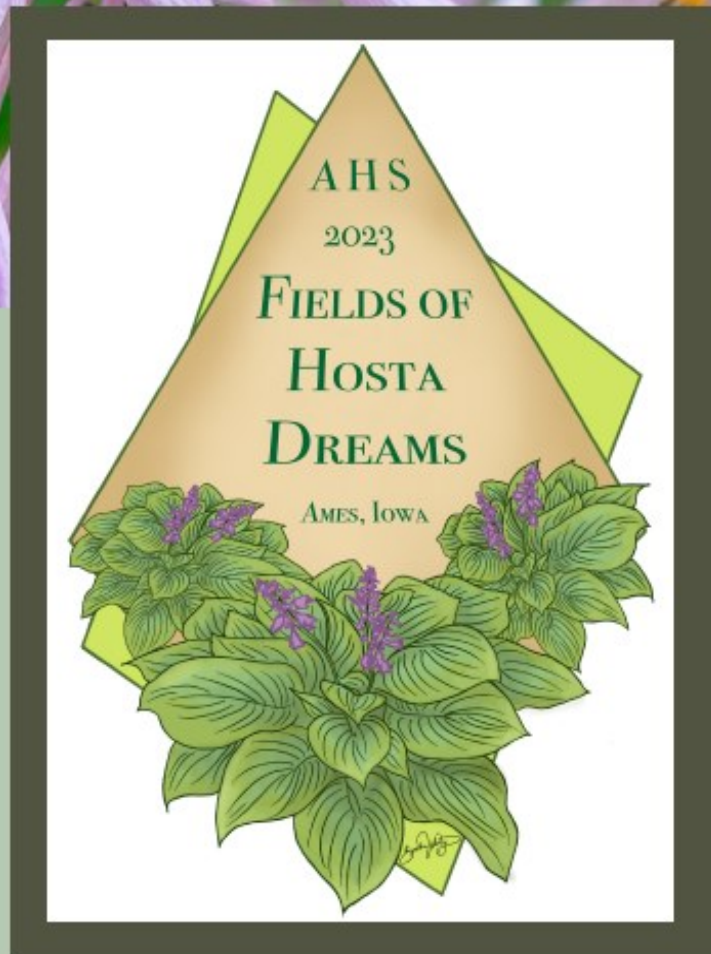


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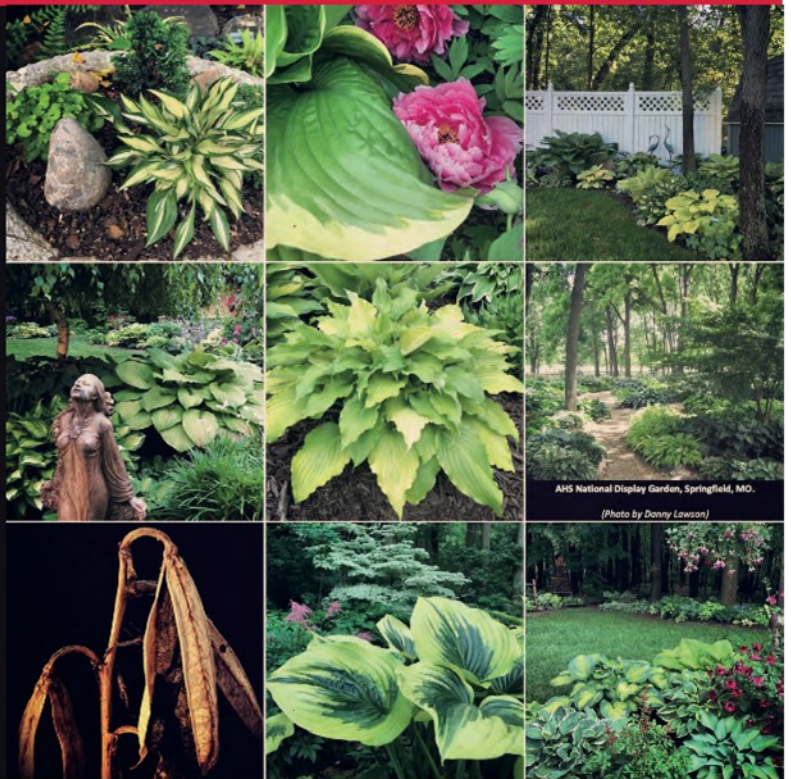
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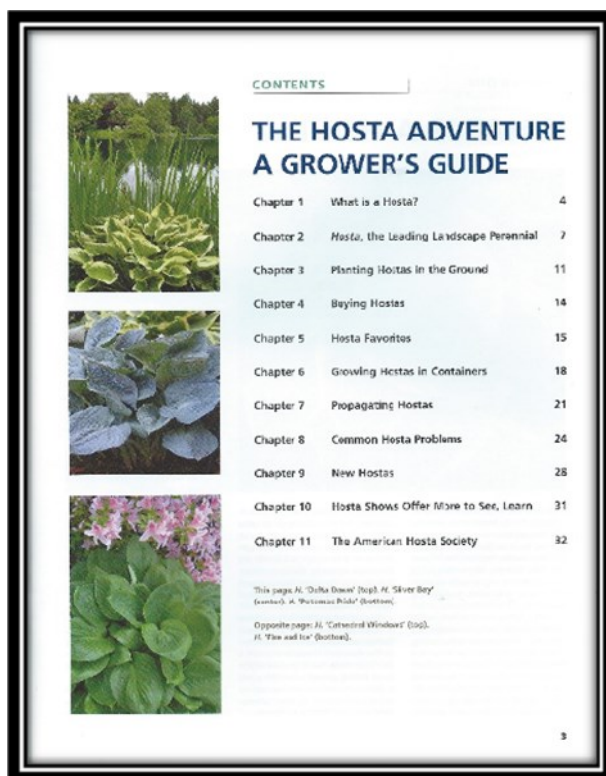
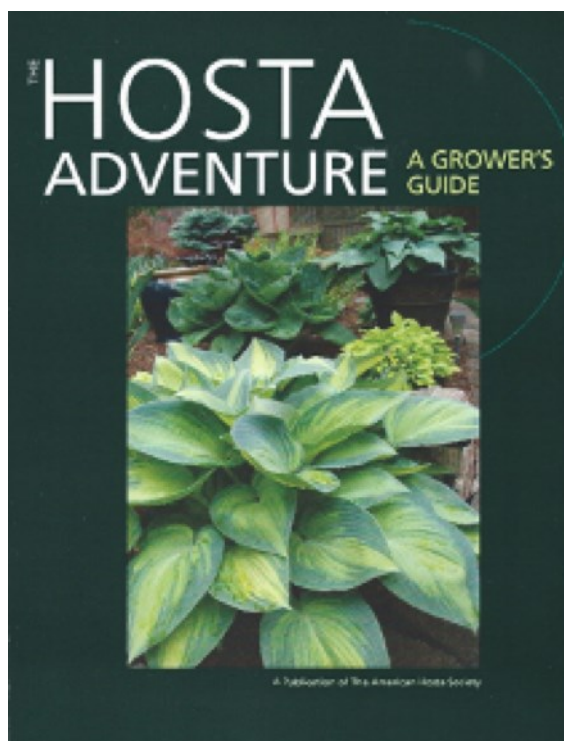




## From AHS Publications

*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.

**Here is a great way to reward new members of your local club. Give them a copy of this American Hosta Society publication.**

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Make checks payable to *The American Hosta Society* and send to:

**Barry Ankney, AHS Publications Sales  
Hosta Adventure  
1104 Oxford Court  
Oakbrook Terrace IL 60181**



# 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



PH

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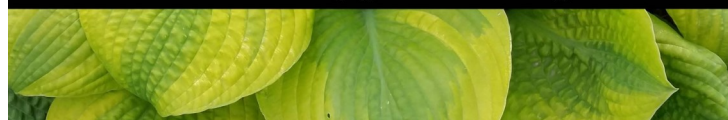
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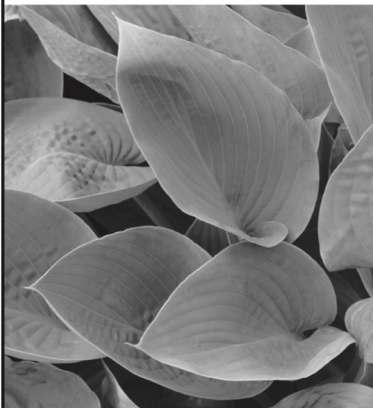
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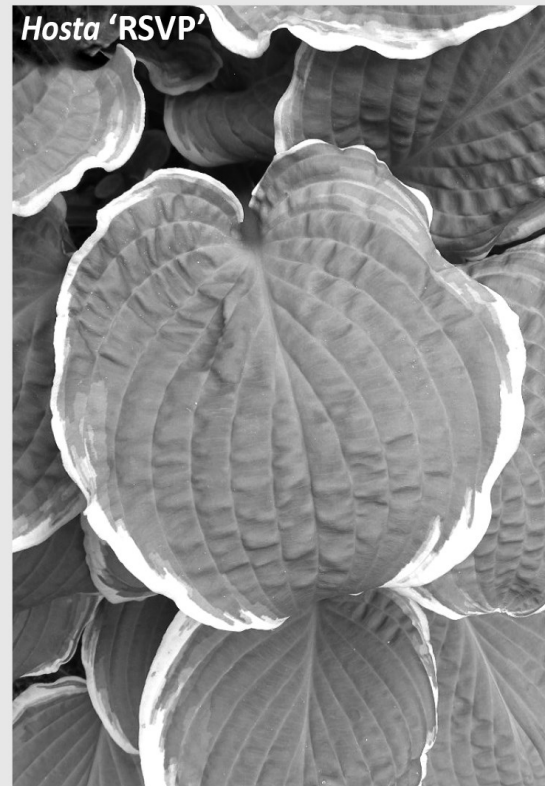
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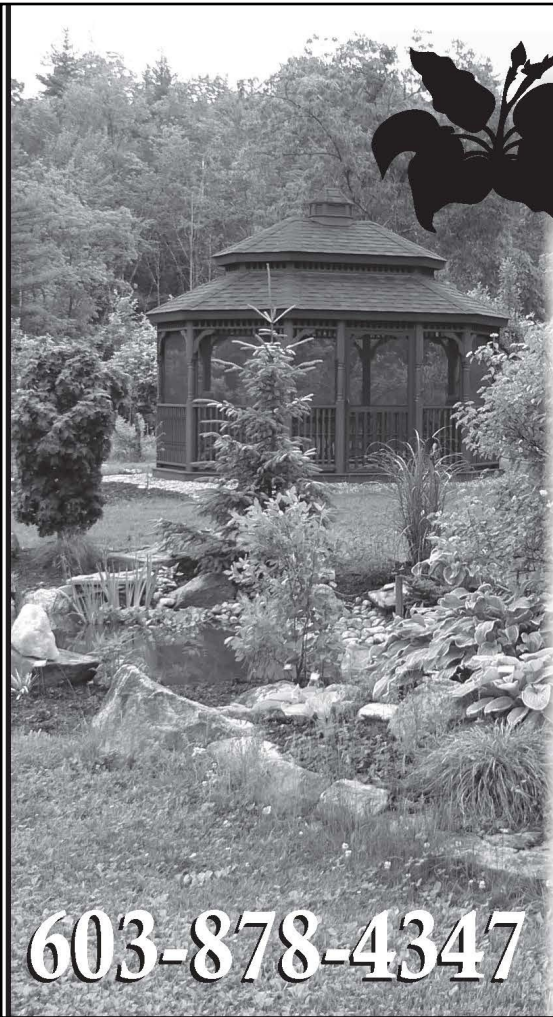
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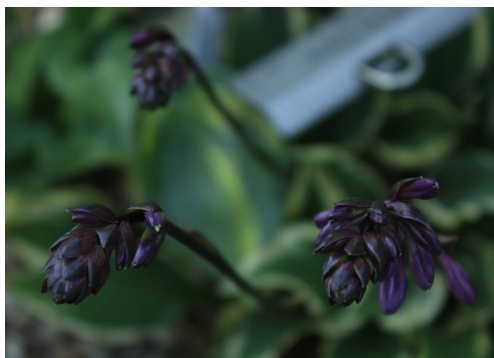
*H. 'Alligator Alley'* (Walters Gardens 12)

Photo by Mary Vertz



*H. 'Backyard Monster'* (Schwarz 07)

Photo by Mary Vertz



*H. 'Pixie Vamp'* (Ward 96)  
Photo by Mary Vertz



*H. 'Dinner Mint'* (Zillis 11)  
Photo by Mary Vertz





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