



The American Hosta Society

April 2024

eNewsletter



H. 'War Paint'

Naylor Creek Nursery 2005

(Photo by Mary Vertz)

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President's Message

Amy Peterson, Oakdale, MN

AHS President's Project - Lesson Plan Assistance Help Request –

The AHS has a significant number of members and likely many have past or present careers in education. I am requesting help from some of you to volunteer to prepare educational lesson plans and associated attachments to that plan that can be used at meetings by AHS or local Hosta Societies that address genius Hosta topics. Ideal goal would be for the topic lesson plan to be targeted for elementary or middle school age children or both. Some ideas include: parts of a hosta plant, hosta leaf shapes, how to plant a hosta, hosta leaf textures, how to hybridize hosta, where hosta originated or any other you can come up with.

These lesson plans can be an entry into an AHS Leaf Show Best Educational Display category. Historically, not every Hosta Show has an entry in this category. The Best Educational Display award was established in 2006 and is presented to the exhibitor of the entry selected as the Best Educational Display in Division IV by the show judges. At a National Convention, this award can be sponsored by local Hosta Societies or other AHS members. Those created would be made available for any Hosta Society to use.

A basic lesson plan template would address the following using the template form provided.

OBJECTIVES: Begin your lesson plan by clearly defining the learning objectives. What do you want your students to know, understand, or be able to do by the end of the lesson? Learning objectives should be **specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART)**. Ensure your objectives are aligned with grade-level expectations.

MATERIALS: List all the materials and resources you'll need for the lesson. This includes: handouts you created for the lesson and or other visual aids, technology, and/or equipment needed. Ensuring you have everything ready in advance will help the lesson flow smoothly.

Compile a list of all the materials, resources, and technology needed for the lesson.

Start the lesson with an engaging introduction that captures /sparks students' attention and provides context for the lesson. You can use anecdotes, questions, multimedia, or real-world examples to pique their interest.

Think about how to connect the material to what students may already know at the target grade-level.

LESSON OUTLINE: Outline the core of your lesson. Break down the content into smaller, digestible, manageable segments. Plan activities and strategies that facilitate student engagement and comprehension. Consider using a variety of teaching methods, such as short lecture, group discussions, and or hands-on activities. Activities that actively involve students in learning are ideal. Consider the pacing of the lesson to ensure you cover all planned activities.

ASSESSMENT: Detail how you will assess student learning during and at the end of the lesson. Include formative assessment strategies (ongoing assessments) and summative assessments (end-of-lesson evaluations). Ongoing and summative assessments can include quizzes, discussions, or other assessment tools appropriate to the setting and grade-level targeted.

CLOSURE: End your lesson with a summary or conclusion that reinforces the key points and learning objectives. This closure helps students consolidate their understanding of the material.


FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES: Suggest follow-up activities to reinforce what students have learned that can occur at home and with adult supervision as applicable to ensure safety.

Thank you for preparing a lesson plan. Ideally would like plans by May 13, 2024.

Best to all,

Amy Peterson, AHS President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

	Lesson Plan Title:		Date:
	Prepared BY:	Email Contact:	
Target Grade-Level:		Estimated Duration: _____ minutes	
Introduction:			
Learning Objectives: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:	1)		
	2)		
	3)		
Materials & Resources Needed:	1)		
	2)		
	3)		
Instructional Strategies & Time Allocation: (i.e. lecture/ demo, hands on)	1)		
	2)		
	3)		
Final Assessment Method:			
Follow-Up Activity Suggestions:	1)		
	2)		
	3)		

If you create tools to use, please attach to your submission of the lesson plan. Send your lesson plan ideas to:
 Amy Peterson, AHS President, at apetersonmn@gmail.com and include in the subject line "LESSON PLAN".



Hostas and Associates

Glenn Herold, Cedarburg, WI

The Sweet Sweetbay Magnolia

Photos by Glenn Herold

I'm a big fan of small, ornamental trees. I look forward to the flowers of Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) and Amur maackia (*Maackia amurensis*) in the spring, admire the bark of three-flowered maple (*Acer triflorum*) and paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*) in the winter, and can't wait for the autumn foliage color of Sky Tower™ Maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba* Sky Tower™) as well as my Japanese maple hybrids. Many of these are tolerant of part shade and perfect for the hosta garden. I hate to play favorites, but if there is a small tree that tops my list of preferences, it's *Magnolia virginiana*, commonly called sweetbay magnolia, laurel magnolia, or swamp magnolia.

Sweetbay magnolia is native to the lowlands and swamps of the Atlantic coastal plain from Florida into Massachusetts. In the most southern regions, it may reach heights of over 60 feet, but further north it rarely exceeds 35 feet. Where I live in Southeast Wisconsin (Zone 5b), 15 to 20 feet is typical. It tends to be multi-stemmed and has a fairly rapid growth rate. The smooth gray bark is mildly scented of the bay-laurel spice, hence one of its common names. Leaves are about five inches long, lustrous bright green on the upper surface and whitened below. In the south, the foliage will be evergreen, but in the northern part of its range it is considered semi-evergreen. My tree holds onto its leaves until spring, when they are replaced by new growth. Young twigs also have a bright green hue. Flowers arrive after the leaves, usually in late May into June, and sporadically throughout the summer. They are about three inches in diameter and have a pleasant vanilla fragrance which, if the wind is right, can be detected at a far distance. The flowers are followed by a fruit known as a fused aggregate of follicles. When ripe, each follicle opens to expose red seeds.



Magnolia virginiana fruit

Unlike most other magnolias, which require full sun and very well-drained soils, sweetbay magnolia will tolerate clayey, poorly drained soils and shade, though full sun or part shade is preferred. Soils, however, should be acidic. In many areas of the Midwest, where soils tend to be alkaline, the leaves will become a chlorotic yellow. I amend the soil around my tree with a sprinkling of sulfur on an annual basis. Though not a perfect solution, it helps to keep the tree attractive and dark green. Other than the physiologic chlorosis issue, there are no serious pest problems.

I was not able to purchase *Magnolia virginiana* locally, for I was constantly told that it was not winter hardy, but I knew that it had survived at least 20 below zero Fahrenheit when I grew it in my Peoria garden, so it certainly was worth a try. I was finally able to find the cultivar 'Jim Wilson,' also known as Moonglow® in Naperville, IL. In the six years I have grown it in Cedarburg, WI, it has never had dieback. I was a bit concerned this winter when the heavy snows caused the leaf-laden branches to bend over to the ground, but they recovered nicely without breakage, unlike many

trees in Cedarburg. Moonglow® is considered one of the most winter hardy cultivars.



Magnolia virginiana 'Moonglow'



Magnolia virginiana 'Moonglow' flower

Others selected for winter hardiness, but less readily available commercially, are 'Northern Belle,' and 'Milton,' which originated in coastal Massachusetts, its northernmost range. Additional cultivars worth seeking out and trying are 'Perry Paige' (Sweet Thing®), a dense, dwarf cultivar of *Magnolia virginiana* variety *australis*, which tops out at eight feet, 'Mardi Gras' and 'Mattie Mae Smith,' which are variegated cultivars with wide yellow margins on their dark green leaves, and 'Havener,' a cultivar with pink flowers.



Magnolia virginiana
'Mattie Mae Smith'

Many of these cultivars are recent introductions and have not been thoroughly tested in more northern climates. If any Minnesota readers have tried *Magnolia virginiana* in their gardens, I would appreciate it if you would email me with the cultivar you grew and whether it was successful. (Glenn.Herold50@gmail.com)

Magnolia virginiana was the first American magnolia to be cultivated in England, having been collected by English botanist and missionary John Banister (1654-1692) in 1678. It is time for it to be used more often in the Midwest and Southern Wisconsin. Mine is planted near our patio where the sweet fragrance of the flowers enhances the elegance of our evening glass of wine. Perfection for the senses of both smell and taste!



Magnolia virginiana native range

Additional articles on plants and gardening can be found on my blog:
<https://TheCottageGardener53012.Wordpress.com>



GO HOSTAS!

Warren I. Pollock, Glen Mills, PA

GO HOSTAS!

COMPOSTING: PATIENCE IS THE RIGHT APPROACH

by Margaret Roach

Prologue by Dr. Warren I. Pollock:

This article (with considerable more detail) was published in The New York Times Sunday May 14, 2023 edition. Margaret Roach is NYT garden and horticulture columnist in charge of the popular full-page section titled "In the Garden." A 30-year award winning garden writer, Ms. Roach has authored three books, probably the best known is "A Way to Garden" (new edition in 2019), which also is the name of her highly acclaimed dot-com podcast. She lives in upstate New York, Hudson Valley.

I've been a New York Times newspaper subscriber since my first college days. When I read her composting article, I chuckled because I tried composting several times with what I considered insufficient success. Likely many other AHS members have had the same outcome.

My attempts at composting were inspired by Russell O'Harra, a former gardening editor at Better Homes and Garden magazine. He lived in Des Moines, Iowa. Russ died in 2011, age 72.

Russ O'Harra was an inspirational hosta luminary in the Midwest, particularly Iowa, for 20 years, probably longer. The Russ O'Harra (ROH) Hosta Society, Ames, Iowa, organized in 1993, is named for him.

For many years, Russ and I had an active pen pal email correspondence. We both were writers interested in the genus Hosta and both liked to gab about horticulture of all sorts, especially what was happening in the AHS.

In the 80s/90s (I don't recall the year), Russ invited me to visit his garden and sleep over. I took him up on it. I flew from Wilmington, Delaware, where I then lived, arriving at his home somewhat jet-lagged in the evening. There barely was any outdoor light, so we decided to start the

garden tour in the morning. Rosanne, his wife, prepared a supper and I met his four daughters. I've written about all of them in AHS articles.

Russ's garden was a **DELIGHT**. To me it was not the specific hostas (a lot of yellow and gold leaves) but his artistic designing with them. Russ was not a classic hybridizer moving pollen around. His forte was his strong observing eye that discovered in his garden numerous natural sports and what the bees pollinated in abundance. His 45 hosta introductions are documented by the ROH Hosta Society on its website.

After we walked around the garden, very slowly with many questions by me and lengthy discussions by Russ, Russ took me to the rear of the property that's usually not seen by visitors. There was his "pride and joy": his **COMPOSTING SITE, SMOKING INTENSELY**. You could feel its heat! It was an open pile, a bit more than a yard wide, a yard deep and maybe about 30 inches high, with no three-sided enclosure of wood boards or poultry wire fencing.

I had never seen an active composting pile before and I was smitten...**smitten hard**. But, as mentioned, my composting never produced what I considered satisfactory results.

In her NYT composting article, Ms. Roach declared: "Don't get hung up on how long it should take or how many citrus peels are too many."

She continued: "When it comes to composting, where things break down - or don't - is often where we get in our own way. We make the whole process too hard by focusing on details instead of the big picture."

"Yes, there are lists and rules that it's tempting to get attached to: the precise ratio of high-carbon ingredients (often called 'browns') to the high-nitrogen ones ('greens') or achieving the ideal temperature for peak activity by particular bacteria and other decomposing organisms. Commercial composting operations rely on those rules, and the science behind them to produce material that is consistent and meets regulatory guidelines."

"We backyard composters can go a little easier on ourselves and still have great results, producing soil-improving bounty from our organic waste. The mantra: **JUST DO IT**."

"Make like nature the experts tell us. Pile on the organic matter and let time pass. Getting hung up on how long the process should take from start to finish is going to make it all feel like too much."

A ROLE MODEL: A WRUNG-OUT SPONGE

“Compost happens. It is a natural act. Any kind of organic matter will break down in time, but decomposition is fostered most effectively - and more quickly - when basic conditions are present. Importantly, the pile should never be too moist or too dry. It should be like a wrung-out sponge.”

“Make like the experts tell us: Pile up the organic matter and let time pass. When you add matter, *think in layers*. Keep the material roughly flat topped - not mountain-shaped - and keep the pile evenly moist: You want repeating layers of ‘brown’-‘green’-soil.”

“The process of decomposition generates heat. In peak activity, commercial piles may cook along at 140 degrees or so. But many home composting systems don't have sufficient mass to reach temperatures between 90 and 140 degrees that break stuff down effectively.”

MIXING vs. TURNING

“The usual prescription: Turn the heap once a year.”

“The bigger the pile the more difficult it can get to aerate it. There is a balancing act between too much moisture and not enough oxygen (air) to feed the hard-working microorganisms.”



A three-sided wood bin, piled high with layers of brown compost.



Many gardeners with lots of organic material to process use a multi-bin system, which allows them to have several piles at various stages of decomposition

Editor's Note: Above pictures were scanned in from the original *NYT*'s article.

Warren's Note: Tumbling (rotating) metallic composters on metal stands were not detailed in the original *NYT* article.

GO HOSTAS!





Book Notice

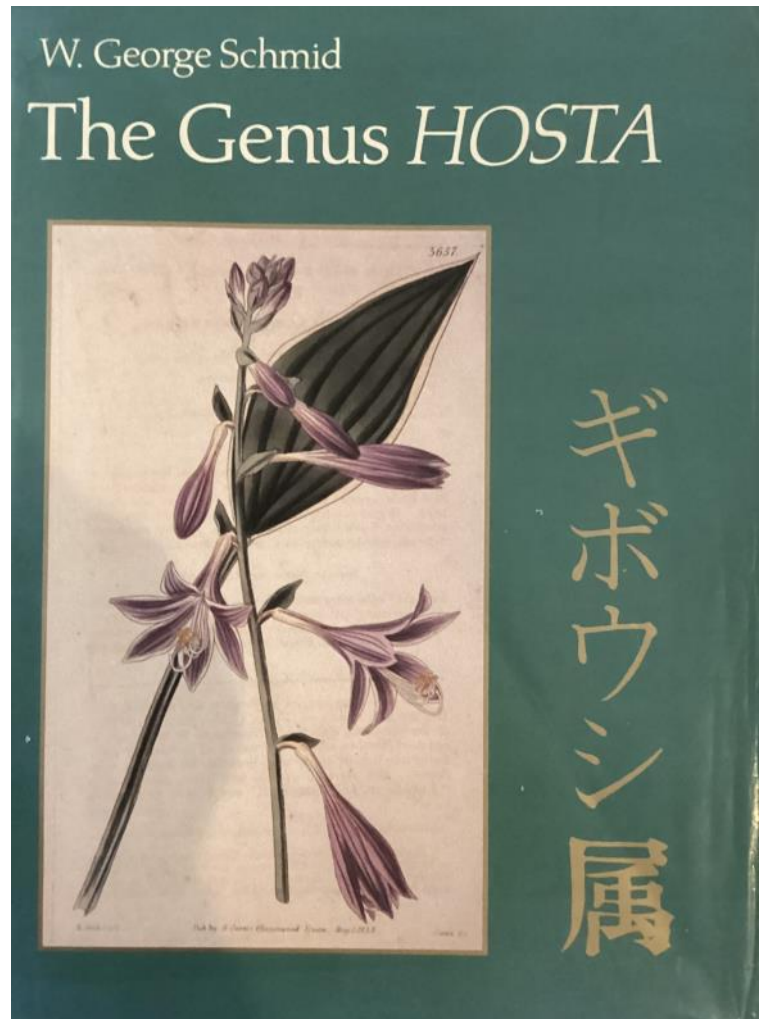
Clyde Crockett, Carmel, IN

The Genus Hosta

Written by W. George Schmid
Technical Director Gilbert S. Daniels
Published by Timber Press, Inc. : 1991

Curtain up; Light the lights! Hostadom's Hosta Mania was transformed to Hosta Hysteria! The biggest one- day sale in the fabled history of Timber Press may have occurred. Many reading this notice may not have been born for this Earth-shattering event or experienced the *frisson* in actually having this tome in your hands but if you like past events such as an appearance of the Beatles, you'd love this one. I was among the thousands who telephoned Portland with an order, eagerly retrieved the package from my mailbox, tore it open, captured what was, immediately on publication, the Hosta Bible of the glorious Hosta Eden, and carefully opened its pages. Given the frenzy this book had generated, it was perhaps best described as the Hosta Grail, better than the discovery of crimped leaves on some treasured sports.

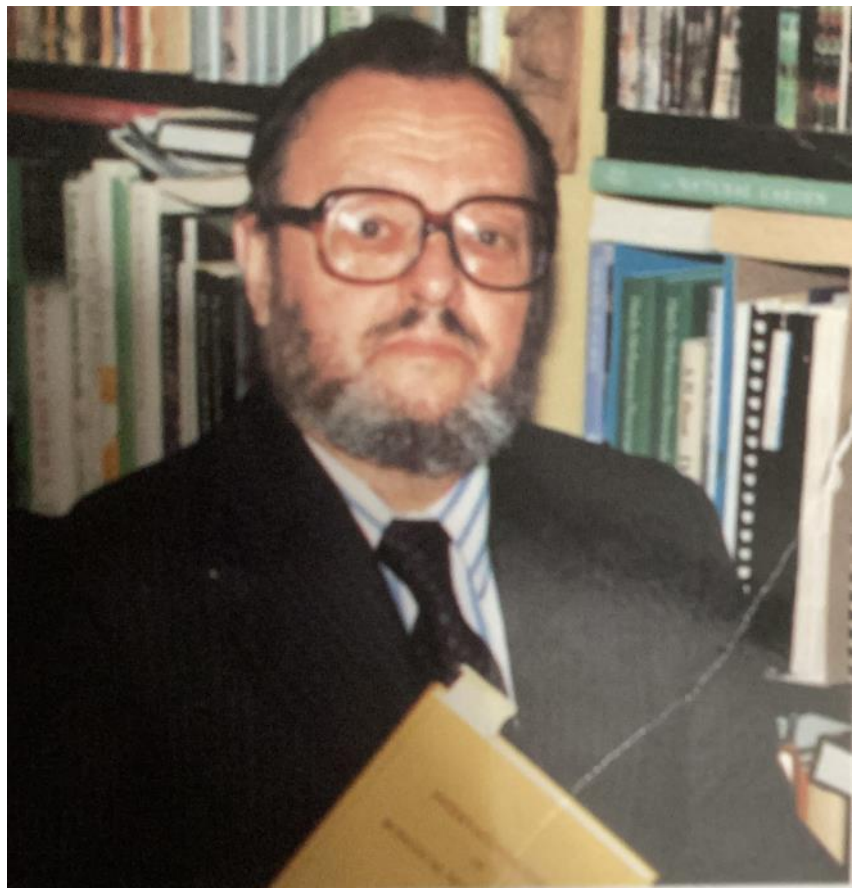
This event of the century was, of course, the publication of ***The Genus Hosta*** compiled and written by Georg Schmid with the technical in-



put of the distinguished Dr. Daniels. At dinner a fellow hostaphile announced that she had invited George to be her houseguest and she explained elaborate plans for his visit. I commented that she was treating him like royalty. She: “He is the nearest thing to royalty I will ever know.” I got the feeling that The Triumvirate of the hosta world, i.e., Pollock, Summers & Vaugh, had become The Tetrarchy.

What is this book? Its crowning achievement is considered to be, indeed was presented as such, the end-all solution to all the important taxonomic questions surrounding the genus. Much to the chagrin of those using costly plant labels, many old-time plants formerly considered to be species were “reduced” to cultivar status. This reduction included favorites in the groups, for example, Fortunei, Elata, and Tokudama, to name just a very few. So, what was *H. fortunei* became *H. 'Fortunei'*. The detailed description of all those varieties considered to be entitled to the rarefied identification as a species covers in fine print some 160 pages of highly technical taxonomic jargon. Cultivated varieties are not overlooked and there are many color photos and lists of various morphological features. The photos are certainly not of the same caliber as those of, say, a Carol Brashear or Frank Rhiel, but I have to remember that it is foremost a science book.

There is a lot more—indeed, there is all you need to know about taxonomy, written in concise and beautiful English prose. George Schmid deserved long, sustained applause and kudos for this phenom-



Wolfram George Schmid

enon of horticultural literature. I think it is appropriate to say his greatest contributions are his scholarly attempts at the overhauling of the nomenclature and taxonomy of hosta species. This massive study furnished the groundwork for further studies by excellent modern-day experts to add to and improve Georg's conclusions and observations. Some criticism of this work that came shortly after publication from a leading English taxonomist has been virtually forgotten. I was very pleased, as Editor, that George accepted my invitation to do a series of articles on species for ***The Hosta Journal***. It is second in tenure only to the great series by Dr. Warren I. Pollock.

Historically, the book is without equal in the saga of the genus hostas I doubt if the book is still on the market but there will be sources. Get this famous book for your collection if you want to have the complete and complete product. In final analysis, (Don't you hate it when people say that) I must warn you. The book is not for the typical hostaphile as I know that person. This is not meant to criticize the intellect, intelligence, eclecticism, curiosity or the cosmopolitan nature of anyone, but to let you know this is likely to be interesting to only a few. You might want to get a copy first from a library and read a bit of it. I truly wish you....

...Happy Reading,

Clyde

NB You can find the correct formulation of hosta names in the excellent and lovely Hosta Library.



Hostas Happenin's

Don Rawson, Grand Rapids, MI

Hosta Beach: No Hostas, but the Scenery is Breathtaking

In a faraway land is an obscure, little Scottish village. There is no gas station, grocery store, or even a stoplight. In fact, the tiny village consists of just seven or eight dwellings, all nestled near the ocean shoreline. The scenery surrounding the settlement is utterly breathtaking.

The village of Hosta sits in a wonderful spot overlooking Loch Hosta, a small lake surrounded by the machair. *Machair* is a Gaelic word meaning fertile, low-lying grassy plain. This is the name given to one of the rarest habitats in Europe which only occurs on exposed western coasts of Scotland and Ireland. In the summer months, the machair is a blast of color with an assorted array of wildflowers and rare orchids, tended incessantly by an abundance of fluttering butterflies.

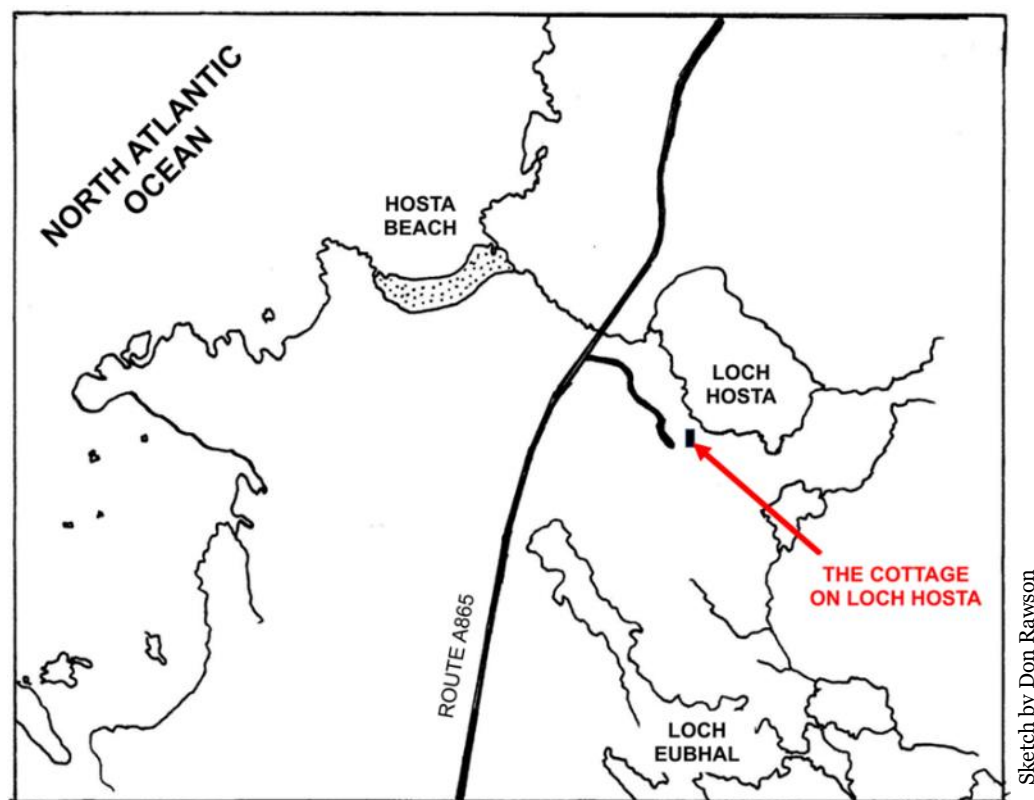


Sketch by Don Rawson

Located on the Scottish island of North Uist, the area around the village of Hosta is a birdwatching paradise with a great variety of seasonal breeding birds and passing migrants: corncrakes, golden eagles, merlin, short-eared owls, godwits, curlews, greenshanks, golden plover, red-throated divers, and whooper swans, to name but a few. The Scottish red deer (*Cervus elaphus scoticus*), which migrated from continental Europe sometime during the Stone Age, thrives on the island. Seals, otters, and basking sharks can often be seen from the nearby ocean coastline. It is no wonder, then, that a beautiful nature preserve is located only a few miles down the road from the village, offering advice and information on the local flora and fauna.

The Great Yellow Bumblebee (*Bombus distinguendus*), one of the rarest species of British bumblebees, can be found in the machair and other flower-rich areas of the island. The species appears to have a particular affinity for red clover.

The adjacent landscape is covered with a patchwork of peat bogs, low hills and lochans, with more than half the land being covered by water. The island is literally peppered with lochs of all shapes and sizes. Many of the more remote ones rarely see man or rod. Some contain a mixture of fresh and tidal salt water, giving rise to some complex and unusual habitats.



A self-catering cottage sits beside Loch Hosta, which is famous for its trout fishing and wildlife. The Cottage on Loch Hosta is a traditional cottage that is a perfect little hideaway just for two, set in a wonderful spot looking out over Loch Hosta and only a five-minute walk from the gorgeous sandy Hosta Beach on the ocean shore. What was once just a ruin has been lovingly rebuilt and completely modernized by its owner to create an inviting retreat. Inside the living accommodation is an open floor plan that is dominated by a large picture window showcasing the amazing view of the loch. The seating has been positioned to take advantage of the view and the cozy wood-burning stove, with a neat dining area alongside and modern kitchen behind. The cottage sits in rough-grassed garden grounds from which gorgeous sunsets can be enjoyed in the evenings. Due to the lack of light pollution on the island of North Uist, the dark skies are ideal for stargazing, and you may even manage to see the Northern Lights.







Photos by Laura Douglas. Used by permission.

The Cottage on Loch Hosta, completely modernized by its owner, overlooks Loch Hosta, a small lake surrounded by the machair. The lake is famous for its trout fishing and wildlife.

Directly to the west is one of the most beautiful beaches in the Western Isles – Hosta Beach, or Traigh Stir. It is an impressive sight when looking down from the high machair dunes. Usually deserted, the view of the beach from all angles is stunning.



Photo by Bill Higham. Used by permission.

As one of the most beautiful coastal landscapes in the British Isles, the beautiful white sand at Hosta Beach stretches along the exposed western coast of this Hebridean island. The beach backs onto gently undulating sand dunes which are a haven for wildflowers, bees and butterflies.



Photo by Jon Thomson. Used by permission.

A colorful array of wildflowers on the machair.

Beautiful white sand largely made up of crushed shells is regularly blown ashore by Atlantic gales. The aquamarine color of the ocean on a sunny day is breathtaking. Considered to be the best and most consistent of the surfing beaches on North Uist, huge swells can roll in from the North Atlantic with waves breaking over the rocks at the edges. The beach backs onto gently undulating sand dunes which are a haven for numerous colorful wildflowers. The spot is ideal for watching a wonderful sunset to the sound of the surf.

Fantastic rock formations frame the beach on both sides. These vertical dykes are quite interesting. A *dyke* is an intrusion of igneous rock between an existing layer of rock. Intrusive igneous rock is formed when magma cools and solidifies beneath the earth's surface. Magma is less dense than the surrounding rock, so it tends to rise toward the surface. If it encounters a crack or weakness in the surface rock, it can flow into the surrounding rock and form an intrusive igneous body. Here, the host rock (gneiss or quartzite) was intruded by dark-colored mafic rock (dolerite or basalt). Quite a sight for the spectator to behold!

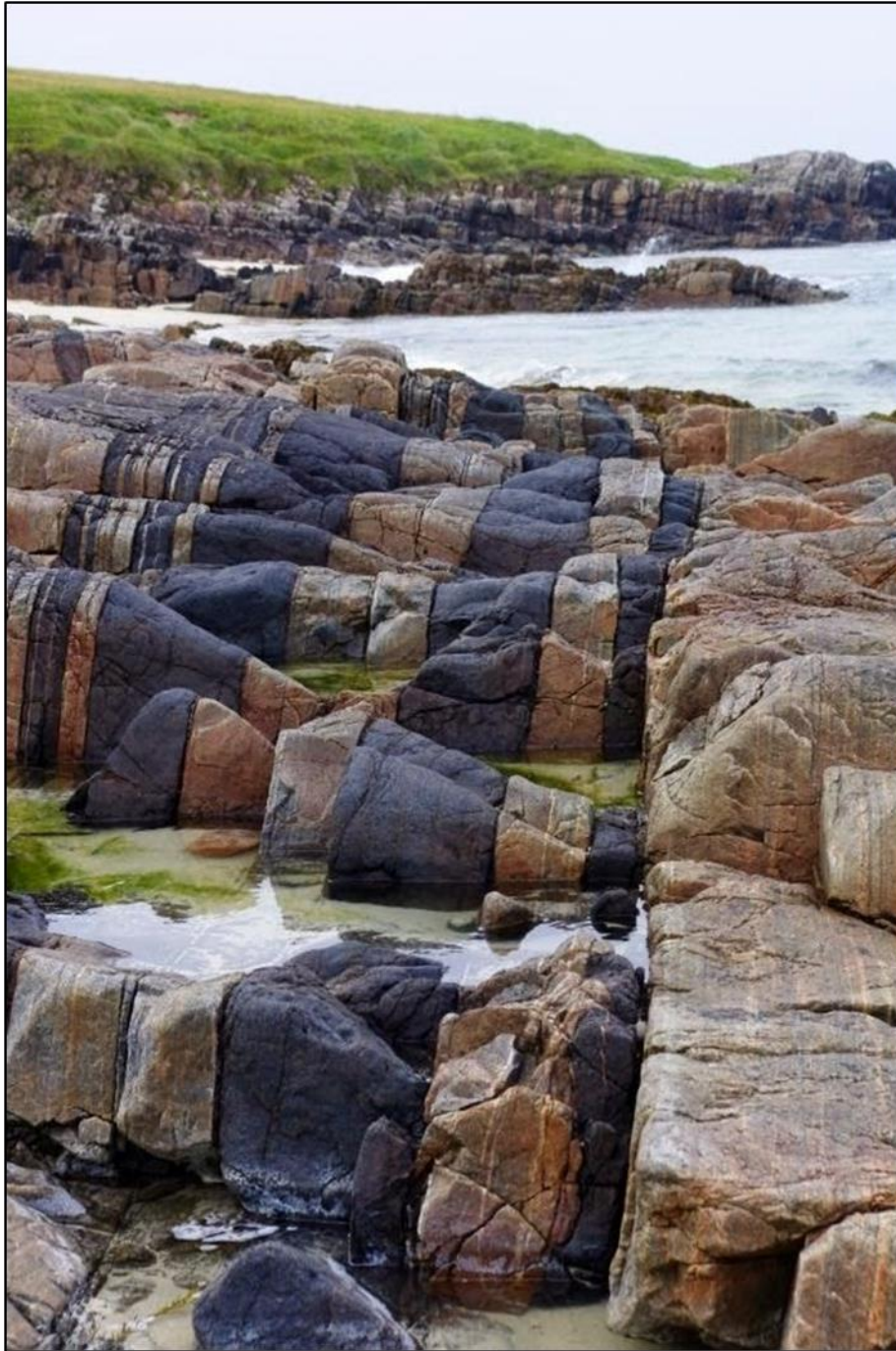


Photo by Geomorphological Features. Used by permission.

Fantastic rock formations frame Hosta Beach on both sides.

While the beauty of Loch Hosta and Hosta Beach are amazing, unfortunately there are no hostas. The name for this settlement dates back to the 1300s when the Outer Hebrides, including the island of North Uist, were undergoing a great deal of violent conflict. Surviving records do not describe the turmoil in detail, but traditional accounts report an incident where one Scottish clan (the Siol Gorrie) dug away the embankment of a loch, causing it to flood a nearby village in which another Scottish family (the Siol Murdoch) lived and hence drown them. The accounts claim that

the floodwater formed Loch Hosta.

Thus, the names for the village of Hosta, Loch Hosta and Hosta Beach predate the establishment of the genus *Hosta* which was given by Austrian botanist Leopold Trattinnick in honor of his contemporary, Austrian botanist Nicholas Thomas Host.



Photo: Public domain.

Austrian botanist Leopold Trattinnick (1764-1849) assigned the genus name *Hosta* to honor his friend and fellow botanist, Nicholas Thomas Host.

Like the history of the Outer Hebrides, the genus name for our beloved plant has undergone radical transition over the years. The first genus name by Carl Peter Thunberg in 1780 was *Aletris*, followed with *Sausurea* by Richard Anthony Salisbury in 1807. Then in 1812, Trattinnick suggested the genus name *Hosta*, but it was considered invalid because the name had been previously used for other plants. To add to the confusion, German botanist Kurt Polycarp Sprengel published the name *Funkia* to honor Heinrich Funk, a German landscape painter and collector of alpine ferns. Finally, in 1905 botanists attending the International Congress of Vienna agreed to conserve the name *Hosta* Trattinnick (1812), in spite of the fact that it had been previously used for two other plants.¹ So, the correct genus name for the Friendship Plant is *Hosta* (capitalized and italicized), as well as the common name “hosta” (lower case).

If you ever have the opportunity to visit the Scottish village of Hosta and stroll the sandy shoreline of Hosta Beach, you will certainly enjoy the unspoiled scenery...the flowers, wildlife, sunsets, and the starry night skies. You may have the chance to stay at The Cottage on Loch Hosta,² to fish the trout-filled waters of Loch Hosta, and to pick up seashells at Hosta Beach. Take your camera to photograph the remarkable rock formations. And if you go, be sure to share your experience with us!

¹ W. George Schmid, *The Genus Hosta* (Portland: Timber Press, 1991), pp. 16, 283.

² The Cottage on Loch Hosta can be booked at <https://www.uniquecottages.co.uk/cottages/west-coast/hebrides/cf3-the-cottage-on-loch-hosta>



Hybridizer Corner . . .

Don Rawson, Grand Rapids, MI

YOU can be a hosta hybridizer with a little help and information. In this column, we are discussing the techniques used to make successful hosta crosses. We are learning how to collect and store hosta seed, and how to grow seedlings. We will also talk about evaluating your new originations and introducing
Review

In the last issue, we looked at a few of the tools that make the job easier. Headband magnifiers allow you to zoom in on what you are doing and reduce eye strain while leaving both hands free to make a cross. The best magnifiers on the market are the original Donegan OptiVISOR. Do not settle for inferior imitations. Order the magnifiers with the DA-5 lens, the optimum magnification for the task at hand.

Some of the tools that are useful for making crosses are hemostats (straight-jaw 5”), tweezers, and reverse action tweezers. I prefer the hemostats for removing the stamens and for grasping an anther to pollinate a flower, but I have friends who use tweezers. It would be quite beneficial to acquire these as you set up your own hybridizing program.

In this issue, we will focus our attention on how to prevent the unwanted fertilization of hosta flowers — various ways to keep bees and oth-

Busy as a Bee

Bees are very adept at what they do. A single bee can pollinate 5,000 flowers in one day. That is where the phrase “as busy as a bee” comes from. Times 5,000 by the number of bees that visit your garden in a day. If just 100 bees are in your garden, then a half million flowers could be pollinated from sunup to sundown!

Honey bees, specifically, are some of the hardest workers on the planet. Depending on their role in the hive, they can spend up to 12 hours working – that is nearly dawn to dusk every day. Their sole purpose in life

is to work so that they can survive. In other words, they work to live, not live to work. Collectively, honey bees must fly 55,000 miles — a distance equivalent to twice around the earth — and visit two million flowers just to make one pound of honey. And while they are collecting all the pollen for their honey, they are also pollinating the flowers they visit. One single bee colony can pollinate 300 million flowers each day. That is remarkable!



Photo by Josh Paufler. Used by permission.

A bee can visit up to 5,000 flowers in a single day. Honey bees, specifically, are some of the hardest workers in the insect world, collecting nectar from dawn until dusk.

As a rule of thumb, the foraging area around a beehive extends for two miles, although bees have been observed foraging up to six miles from their hive. The time of day in which bees begin to pollinate depends upon the species of the bee and the weather conditions (temperature, humidity, windy vs. calm, cloudy vs. sunny, etc.).

Besides bees, there is a gamut of other insects to contend with: wasps, moths, butterflies, flies, and beetles are all prolific pollinators. Note that most pollinators are airborne. So, if you as a hybridizer can protect the flowers from flying insects, your chances of being successful is quite good.

Below are some of the effective methods used to exclude pollinators from your flowers.

Keeping Pollinators Away from Flowers

The first method to prevent unwanted pollinators from spoiling your fun is to **make your crosses early in the morning**. Bees and most other flying insects are mid-morning risers. That means that you have an opportunity to beat the bees at their own game! The con is that it requires you to get up early every morning, which is unfortunate if you have other early morning obligations. On occasion, you may have bad weather (rainy, windy). Additionally, there may be too many hostas to pollinate all of them in early morning. So, while this is one method that may or may not be suitable for you, there are other techniques available as well for keeping the bees from messing things up.

Placing bags over the hosta flowers the night before is a different approach to solving the problem. Technically known as pollination bags, just about any type of bag will work (including white plastic shopping bags), but some work better than others. Mesh bags — e.g., produce bags, laundry bags, mesh ball bags, organza wine bags, etc. — are a better option than plastic bags because they prevent the flowers from overheating. (Many hostas will not set seed when the temperature is above 85° F.) Mesh bags do not blow in the wind like plastic bags will. The various mesh bags mentioned above can be purchased online from sources such as Amazon and Uline.



Photo by Pat Noisssonneault. Used by permission

Some pollinators are very small. Therefore, the fabric selected for mesh bags must restrict even the tiniest of insects. Here, a sweat bee (*Agapostemon splendens*) visits a hosta flower in the garden of Pat Noisssonneault.



Photo by Kristin Lotz. Used by permission.

An organza bag is perfect for protecting flowers from pollinators such as bees, flies, moths, and butterflies. Available in various sizes up to 12" × 16", organza bags are traditionally made from silk, but many modern organzas are woven with synthetic fibers such as polyester or nylon. The bags are equipped with a drawstring.

A potential problem with mesh bags, however, is that the holes in the mesh may be too large (some bees and flies are very small). Another issue is that the mesh can snag the flowers when pulling the bag on and off. Take care when doing so!

You can also make your own bags with fiberglass screen from the hardware, which is cheap and easy to do. This is a better option than fabric bags that tend to get snagged on flowers. Remember that every time a flower is pollinated, the bag needs to be slid off and back on again, so the odds of snagging a flower or seedpod is very probable.



Photo by Don Dean. Used by permission.

Compared to mesh bags, pouches made from fiberglass screen are less likely to snag and break off hosta flowers. The pouches are seamed on one side only, leaving the opposite side open to place the pouch around the scape. The open side is then folded over and clipped shut.

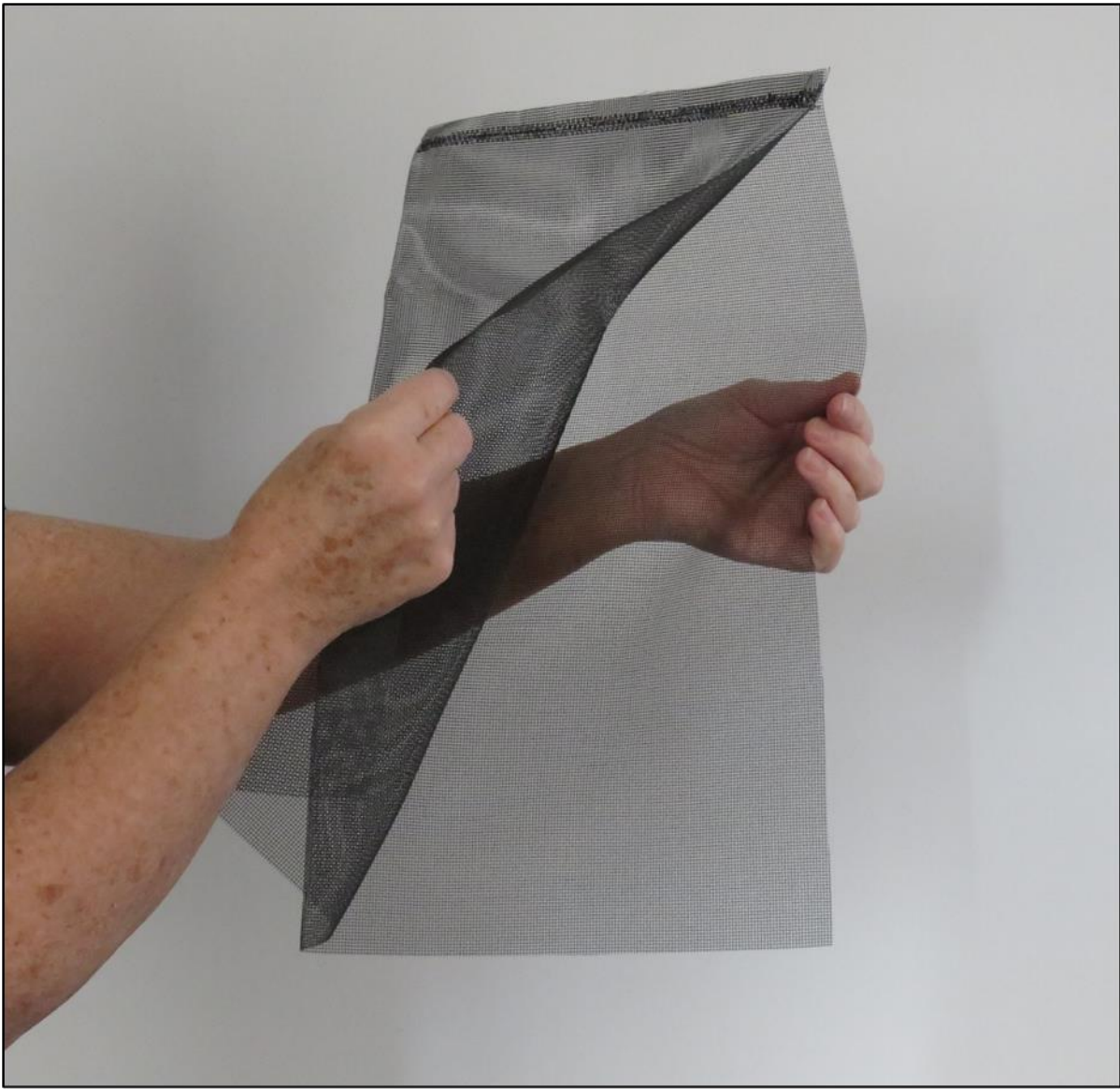


Photo by Pam Rawson

If using a bag to protect the flowers, a stake should be placed next to the scape to support the bag and prevent it from blowing in the wind. Select a stake — bamboo, plastic, driveway marker, etc. — that is somewhat taller than the scape itself, remembering that the scape will continue to grow. Fasten the scape to the stake with twist ties or flexible garden wire. Seal the bag securely with a drawstring or clothes pins.

For large hostas with many scapes, a sheer curtain or tutu fabric can be placed to cover the entire plant, fastening the fabric around the base of the plant with clothes pins.

A third technique for preventing the unwanted pollination of hosta flowers is to **emasculate the flowers the day before**. This involves walking through the garden in the evening to find flowers that will open the

next morning. Once a flower is selected and marked, the stamens and petals are removed but the pistil is left intact. Usually, the bees will overlook it the next day and you can make your cross. A different approach is to wander through the garden in the evening to find flowers that are about to open. Then **squeeze the bud and pollinate it**. With any luck, the cross will be successful without being affected by pollinators that may visit the next day.¹



Photo by Joanna Kovalcsik. Used by permission.

Removing the stamens and petals of the flower the night before is one way to avoid unwanted pollination from bees and other insects. Hemostats are the tool of choice for doing so.

If you have a walkout basement or garage, you can **put your breeding plants in pots and bring them indoors the night before.** The flowers will open the next morning while you are still asleep and will be ready for pollination after you enjoy a hardy breakfast. Here are some tips if this method is used:

1. Use a heavy-duty pot with a solid rim and drainage holes .
2. Choose a large enough pot that your plant will not soon become root-bound.
3. Use a free-draining potting mix. Half Canadian peat and half fine pine bark with the addition of perlite is suitable for hostas in containers.
4. Set the potted hostas on benches or tables at a convenient working height.
5. Use a cheap plastic oil pan from a dollar store to create a constant water reservoir under the pot. (Hostas set pod better when ample water is available.)
6. Take good care of your precious hybridizing stock! Apply Osmocote or Nutricote in spring. Miracle Gro Bloom Booster can be used to boost bloom, but should be applied 2 months before the bloom period begins and thereafter every 2 weeks.

The serious hybridizer may consider **building a hybridizing room.** If shade cloth is used, a density of 30 to 50% is adequate for northern gardens. It is best if there are no steps to enter or exit. The room must be insect and rodent proof. Ideally, the hybridizing room should be equipped with benches at different heights and have good lighting. Having a spigot to water plants is also handy. Some hybridizing rooms also include a plant irrigation tray.



Photo by Doug Beilstein. Used by permission.

A hybridizing house enclosed with shade cloth is a wonderful addition to the hybridizer's arsenal if you have the room and budget for it. Some hybridizing rooms include a plant irrigation tray with a water-proof lining, which works well because hostas set pod better when ample water is available.

These are the most common methods for controlling insects so that you can make your own intentional crosses. If you are unable to implement them, you can always let the bees do the work and resort to growing open pollinated seed, or perhaps purchase seed from other hosta breeders. Give these methods a try!

In the Next Issue...

After making a cross, you will want to somehow mark the flower that you just pollinated. This will allow you to keep track of which flowers were pollinated with what pollen. In the next issue, we will look at some of the various methods for labeling a cross.

¹ See the "Protecting the Pollen" by Ken Skupky (*The Hosta Journal*, 2010, Vol. 41, No. 1).



And In Other Hosta News . . .

Reminders for AHS Members!!

Get your cameras ready for summer! Capture your favorite hostas throughout the summer. Then remember to submit your favorite photos to the annual photo contest. Watch for details in the AHS Journal and set a reminder for fall to get those pictures entered!



Public Domain Picture

Popularity Poll



Each year the American Hosta Society (AHS) conducts a popularity poll among its members to determine their favorite Hostas.

Popularity polls are important to Hosta gardeners, letting everyone know which plants perform best in their gardens throughout the years.

From AHS Popularity Poll website

Remember to vote for your favorite hostas! Sign into the 'Members Only' section on the AHS [webpage](#) and follow the instructions under 'Popularity Poll'. **Popularity Poll Voting closes July 31.**

Anyone can explore the [AHS Hosta Treasury](#). Have a unique seedling you'd like to register and be part of the Hosta Treasury? Visit [AHS Hosta Registration](#) for details and start documenting your "treasure" with pictures (don't forget your ruler too)!



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About AHS



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Address:	City, State, Zip Code:
Phone:	Email:

*Please see cancellation policy at www.hostaconvention.org

EARLY REGISTRATION if received by 1/31/24	\$ 240
STANDARD REGISTRATION if received by 4/30/24	\$ 255
LATE REGISTRATION received after 5/1/24 before 6/8/24	\$ 275
MEALS ONLY (companion)- Thursday Picnic, Friday Buffet & Saturday Banquets only	\$ 175
GARDEN TOUR BUS includes bus fee and box lunches for Friday and Saturday garden tours - *select lunch choice below	\$150

→	\$
→	\$
→	\$

* Select ONE Box Lunch per day (Tour Bus riders ONLY) - lunch on your own for self drive attendees

Friday	<input type="checkbox"/> Deli Turkey Sandwich	<input type="checkbox"/> Smoked BBQ Chicken Sandwich	<input type="checkbox"/> Mediterranean Vege Sandwich
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/> Bacon Turkey Sandwich	<input type="checkbox"/> Steak & Arugula Sandwich	<input type="checkbox"/> Mediterranean Vege Sandwich

* Optional Wednesday Tour (choose only ONE)

WHALE WATCH/BOSTON (7:30am-5:30 pm) inc. transportation	\$ 126 /person
BOSTON/DUCK BOAT TOUR (7:30am-5:30pm) inc. transportation	\$ 108 /person

→	\$
→	\$

Thursday Clambake Meal Choices: <input type="checkbox"/> Lobster (1 1/4 lb) <input type="checkbox"/> Steak (10 oz sirloin) <input type="checkbox"/> BBQ Chicken	Saturday Banquet Meal Choices: <input type="checkbox"/> Garlic Parm Chicken <input type="checkbox"/> New England Scrod <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetable Kabobs
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Hosta Show: Please check if you wish to

☐ Judge ☐ Clerk

Plan # _____ entries in the Hosta Leaf Show

Plan # _____ entries in New England Seedling & Sport Competition

Rules & Regulations available at www.hostaconvention.org

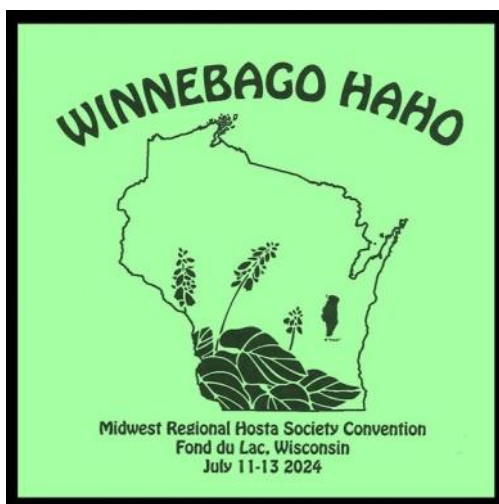
Judges Bootcamp (Tuesday, June 18): Please check if you plan to attend

<input type="checkbox"/> Judges Clinic I (1-5 PM)	<input type="checkbox"/> Judges Clinic II (6-8 PM)
<input type="checkbox"/> Need Judges Handbook (\$10 payable at Clinic)	

I AM WILLING TO VOLUNTEER ☐ YES ☐ NO



And In Regional News . . .



*Winnebago Haho
Wisconsin Hostality*

2024 MRHS Convention

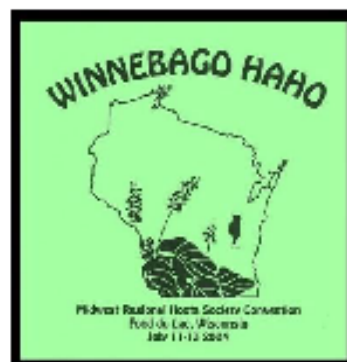
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 Remember to request the special **2024 MRHS Room Rate**
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REGISTRATION DETAILS *(Please print clearly - one attendee per form)*

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Address:	City, State, Zip Code:
Phone:	Email:

**Please see cancellation policy at midwesthostasociety.org*

EARLY REGISTRATION if received by 3/15/24 (bonus gift plant) \$ 149

STANDARD REGISTRATION if received by 6/15/24 \$ 149

LATE REGISTRATION received after 6/15/24 \$ 169

MEALS ONLY (companion or vendors)- Friday lunch buffet, Fri & Sat Banquets only \$ 96

\$	
\$	

Optional Thursday night welcome event – LaClare Family Creamery	\$ 35 /person	\$
Friday Banquet Meal Choice: <input type="checkbox"/> Roast Pork Loin <input type="checkbox"/> Panko Crusted Walleye <input type="checkbox"/> Pasta Primavera (veg.)	Saturday Banquet Meal Choice: <input type="checkbox"/> 8 oz. Sirloin Steak <input type="checkbox"/> Pecan Crusted Chicken Breast <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetable Stir Fry (veg.)	TOTAL DUE \$

Make Check Payable to: 2024 MRHS Convention

MAIL THIS FORM AND PAYMENT TO: Barry Ankney 1104 Oxford Court, Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181-5249

Hosta Show: Please check if you wish to <input type="checkbox"/> Judge <input type="checkbox"/> Clerk Plan # _____ entries in the Hosta Leaf Show Seedling Competition: Plan # _____ entries in Seedling Competition Rules & Regulations available at MIDWESTHOSTASOCIETY.ORG	Friday night auction I plan to donate _____ items for the auction. Saturday Gardens tour ride sharing transportation: I can provide transport for _____ persons. I will need transport for _____ persons.
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- Enjoy garden tours open only to AHS members.
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- Vote on the most popular *Hostas* with our popularity poll.
- Enjoy the camaraderie of fellow *Hosta* enthusiasts.

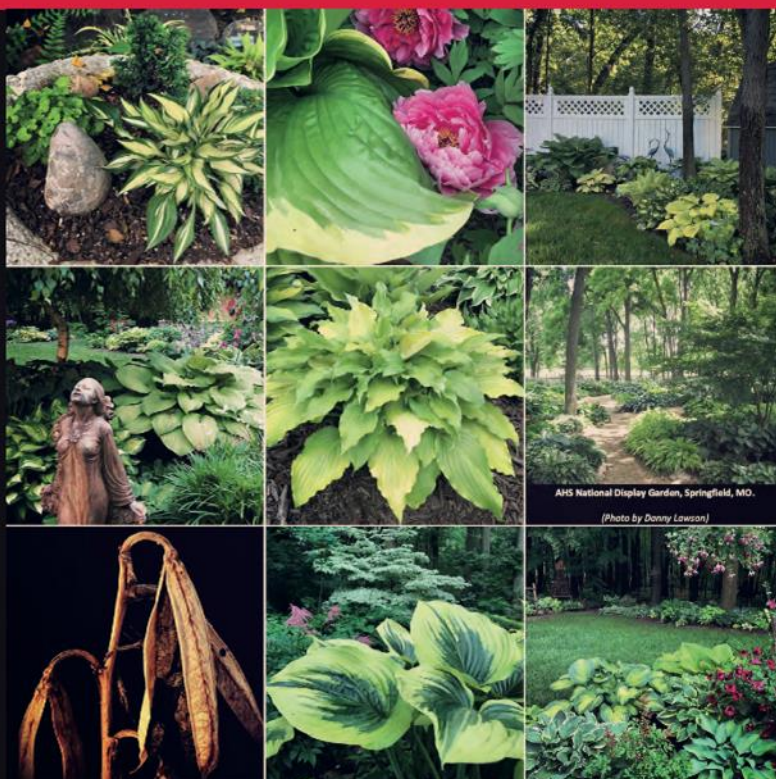
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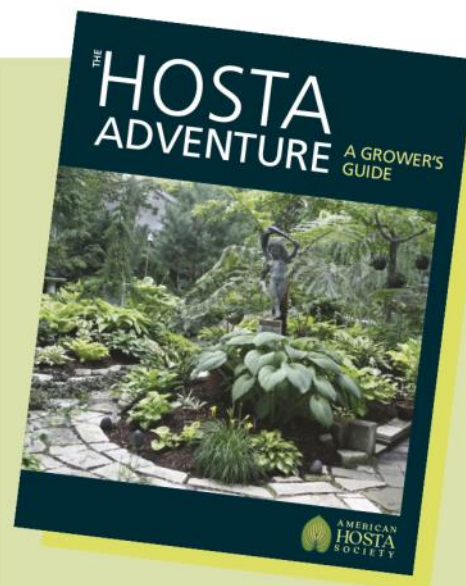
4th
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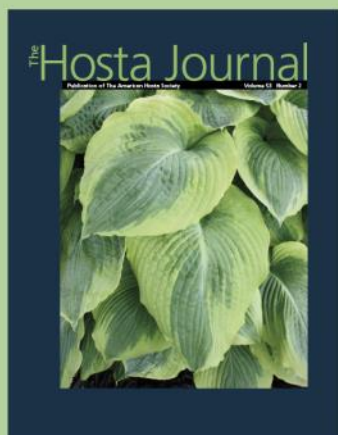
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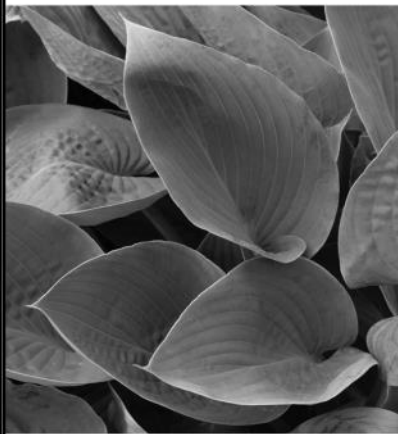
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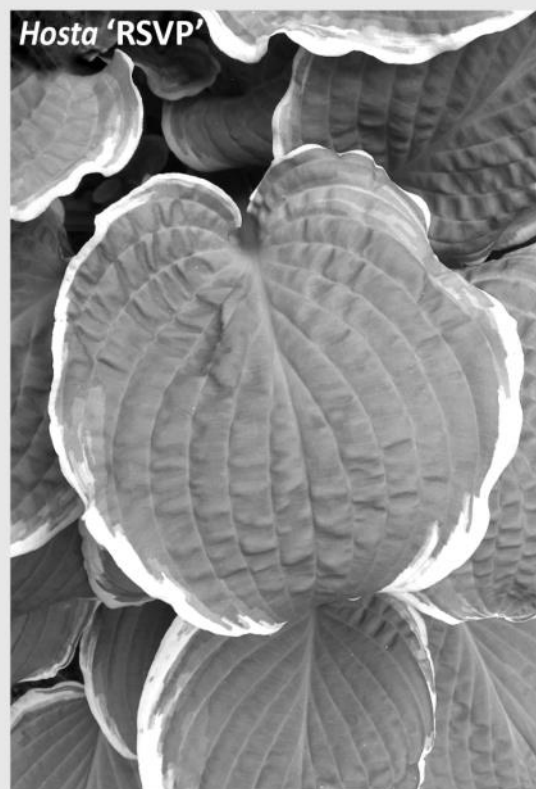
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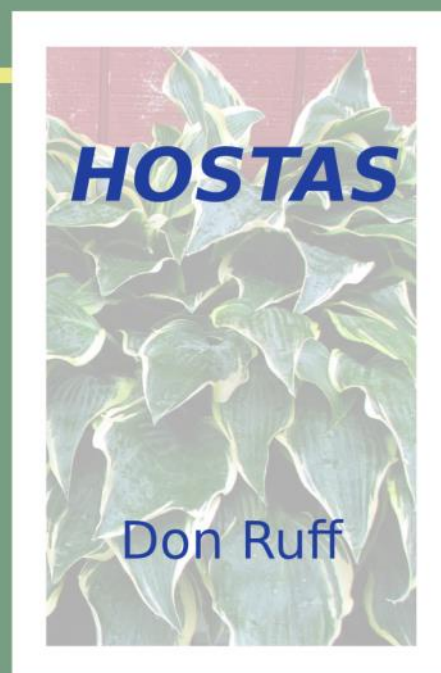
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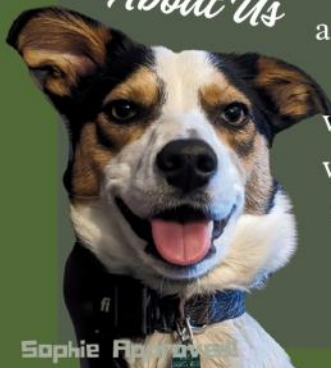
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