



# ONTARIO HOSTA SOCIETY

## JANUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER.

VOLUME 14 ISSUE 1

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*If you have not already paid  
your 2008 subscription,  
please read page 11.*

### PRESIDENTIAL MUSINGS

First of all, may I take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you and yours, a very happy, healthy and prosperous 2008. May your gardens be full of every type of song, wheelbarrow loads of laughter, bountiful harvests and of course may they be chock full of Hosta.

I know we are all eagerly awaiting spring and wondering what the rest of this winter is going to bring. That tremendous "thaw" the second week of January had Barry and I arriving back up north to no snow whatsoever. Actually kind of balmy. Fortunately it didn't last long enough to trick the plants. Another ground hog day coming up on February 2<sup>nd</sup> in this Leap Year. Hope it's good news Willy!

All of our new volunteers have settled nicely into their positions within the O.H.S. and I would like to thank them all very much. Our newsletter continues on thanks to Lesley Chapman, our Hosta Adoption program is safe with Cindy Deutekom (with Virginia Hildebrandt agreeing to stay on as a Director at Large) and last but certainly not least, Kevin Plumley has

*(Continued on page 2)*

agreed to take over as our liaison with the AHS after the loss of our dear friend Margot.

Our Executive have once again come up with a wonderful array of events for us this year. First up – our February 24<sup>th</sup> meeting at the T.B.G. We are honoured to have Mark Zilis with us on that date and look forward to tapping into his hosta wisdom. The full line up is within this newsletter and as always, we relish new insights and ideas from all of our members. Please don't hesitate to share your garden knowledge with us through our newsletter as well as articles/photo's etc. from any of our excursions. Also, feel free to come on out and share the volunteer experience with us all.

**HERE'S TO MANY MORE GLORIOUS OUTINGS, BEAUTIFUL GARDEN VIEWINGS AND MUCH GARDENING JOY AND COMRADERIE FOR 2008**

*Sandra*

### **Ontario Hosta Society**

Ontario Hosta Society Membership can be obtained by writing to (new address):

**Ontario Hosta Society  
2301 5th Street Louth,  
St. Catharines, Ontario,  
Canada L2R 6P7**

**Annual Dues: \$15.00/YR  
\$40.00/3 YR**

**American: \$16.00/YR Foreign: \$17.00/YR**

Your membership year runs from January 1st to December 31st. Members joining after October 1st in any year are deemed to be paid-up until December 31st of the following year. **First-time members receive a bonus copy of "The Hosta Adventure –A Grower's Guide"**

### **American Hosta Society**

Memberships can be obtained by writing to:

**Sandie Markland  
AHS Membership Secretary  
8702 Pinnacle Rock Ct.  
Lorton, VA, 22079 - 3029 U.S.A.**

E-mail: [ahsmembershipsecretary@earthlink.net](mailto:ahsmembershipsecretary@earthlink.net)

Membership, for Canadians, is \$39.00 US per year or \$107.00 US for 3 years. Money order or cheque drawn on a US bank. Memberships can now also be paid by VISA or Master Card online at the American Hosta Society website at **[www.hosta.org](http://www.hosta.org)**

# Upcoming Events for 2008

**Winter Meeting and Speaker — Mark Zilis — Sunday 24th February, 2008** - Toronto Botanical Gardens, Garden Hall Auditorium  
(see Page 4 for complete details)

**Bus Tour 2008 — Sunday 22nd June**  
More details to follow.

**South Western Ontario Picnic— Sunday 10th August, 2008**  
More details to follow

**Hosta Auction — Weekend of September 13/14th, 2008** at TBG with Mike Shadrack - Watch this space

## We Welcome our New Members

Shirley Mackie	North Bay	Ontario
Theresa Moore	Toronto	Ontario
Gordon Chinnick	Mississauga	Ontario
Sabrina Ross	Orleans	Ontario
Gary Pearson	Cambridge	Ontario
Cimetiere Beechwood	Ottawa	Ontario
Peter Kinsella	Rothsay	New Brunswick

## Correction

**We inadvertently published an incorrect phone number for Goldenbrook Hostas—Blackstock. It is 905 986 4363. Our apologies for any inconvenience this may have caused.**

## **WINTER MEETING**

**Date:** Sunday, 24th February, 2008  
**Time:** 12.30 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. (light refreshments)  
**Location:** Toronto Botanical Gardens, Garden Room  
**Topic:** “Hostas of Distinction”  
**Speaker:** Mr. Mark Zilis

**Mark will be discussing the best hosta cultivars to grow, hostas in Japan (in the wild and in collections) hostas in the landscape, propagation and problems (diseases, pests etc)**

Mark is the owner of Q & Z Nursery Inc., Rochelle, IL. The nursery is a leading supplier of hostas to the wholesale nursery market.

Mark received a B.S. in ornamental horticulture in 1976 and an M.S. in horticulture in 1979 from the University of Illinois. He has been an active member of the American Hosta Society since 1980, serving on its Board of Directors, judging leaf shows and as an auctioneer at national conventions. Mark has studied hostas in garden throughout the U.S. and during trips to Japan.

He has also been a leader in the development of plant tissue culture techniques and is a frequent speaker on the subject as well as topics related to hostas, herbaceous perennials and wildflowers. He has introduced many tens of hostas including “Sugar and Cream”, “Pineapple Upside Down Cake” and “Leather Sheen” to name a few.

Mark resides in Rochelle with his wife Katie, and their four children

**Join us to hear Mark who will no doubt leave us excitedly anticipating the end of winter and the start of spring.**



## **ARTICLES WANTED!**

- ◆ Do you like to write?
- ◆ Do you have pictures and a short article about a new garden or renovation?
- ◆ Have you any “Lessons Learned” that you would share?
- ◆ Have you discovered a clever gardening tip that we would enjoy?

We are always looking and welcome new articles, pictures etc for the newsletter.

Send your contribution to [hostaed@rogers.com](mailto:hostaed@rogers.com)

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## **Available Position**

**We are still looking for someone to help Bob Leask with organizing and coordinating the Annual Bus Tour.**

**If you would be interested or know someone who would be, please contact Bob at [Rleask@hotmail.com](mailto:Rleask@hotmail.com)**

## Tribute to Margot Dargatz

I will always remember the first time I heard mention of the hosta nursery. It was 1993 and Margot (my mother) was sitting at the dining room table surrounded by books about plants and sketches of a nursery layout. As I walked into the room my mother asked what I thought a good name would be for a hosta nursery. I responded by asking what a hosta was. My mother answered, "Those green plants that have been growing under the crabapple trees forever, of course." Of course!, I remember thinking – why would anyone want to sell those? Why would anyone want to buy them? Why would anyone want to have a whole nursery full of them?

Long before Hosta Choice Gardens existed, my parents enjoyed spending time outdoors, gardening, and entertaining friends. It was not surprising that they came up with a way to incorporate many of their favourite activities into a business.

Both Margot and Udo emigrated from Germany to Canada at around age 12. As new immigrants both of their families moved around a lot to find jobs to better their families' lives. This was one of the main reasons Margot and Udo wanted to find a nice quiet homestead where they could put down roots and provide stability for their own family. After they married in 1965, they started saving and searching for a quiet, picturesque country property where they could raise a family. Finally, in 1969, they purchased a 50-acre property, with 15 acres of mature woods, and then they designed their house which was built in 1971. While my sister and I were growing up, the house was surrounded by green lawns, an orchard, a swimming pool and a swing set. Once the nursery was started, these areas were quickly taken over by display gardens, a parking lot, polyhouses, and then more display gardens.

The idea to start a hosta nursery originated from a meeting of gardening friends playing a game of "What's your favourite perennial?" Margot realized that if she could only keep one type of plant in her gardens, it would be her hostas – all three varieties of them!

This was the spark that led to the decision to start a nursery. Margot began researching and shopping for stock plants with the hopes of finding 35 to 50 different varieties, and Udo started the physical task of creating a garden of raised beds. An important thing to understand about my mother is that she never settled for mediocrity. Once she started a project, she would strive for nothing short of perfection. The vision of her hosta nursery was in her head and the building began.

Soon, Margot and Udo realized that it would be hard to stop at 50 varieties of hosta. They were quickly learning how many different types there were and how easily they could become addicted to trying to collect them all! Fortunately, they also discovered that there were support groups for people with their obsession – the Ontario Hosta Society, the American Hosta Society and Hosta College. They set out to join these groups, attend meetings, meet many hosta-knowledgeable people, and spend hours and hours discussing this amazing plant.

As Margot's hosta knowledge and hosta acquaintances grew, so did her vision of what the nursery should look like. As she found more and more hostas to add to her collection she delighted in classifying them into descriptive gatherings within the gardens. Some of her favourite groupings were: Girls' and Boys' Names, Royalty, Music, Animals, Romance, Bar & Restaurant, Travel, and Angels. This unique idea helped to make the many garden paths easier to navigate and much more memorable to their customers.

Five years after Hosta Choice Gardens was first begun, Margot and Udo retired from their professional lives (Margot was a medical laboratory technologist and Udo was a teacher and principal) and opened the nursery and display gardens on a full-time basis.

Margot loved to learn about new cultivars, commit many thousands of names (and spellings and details about each plant) to memory, and spend the winter pouring over the catalogues to determine which plants were sure to be popular sellers for the next season. Udo was happy to let her take over those tasks, while he toiled outside: building hosta beds, erecting polyhouses, installing irrigation systems, and keeping the weeds and slugs under control.

Margot's interest in hostas extended far beyond her gardens. She was an active member of many different societies, including the Ontario Hosta Society, the American Hosta Society, The Michigan Hosta Society and the Great Lakes Hosta Society. She was AHS Region 7 director, a member of the AHS Strategic Planning Committee, and a member of the American Hosta Grower's Group (an association of professional hosta producers and nursery people). Another of Margot's passions was participating in hosta leaf shows in the U.S.A. at the national level, both as an exhibitor and judge. As an exhibitor, her home-grown hosta leaf entries won numerous awards. Margot was also one of only two accredited Senior-level hosta judges in Canada and she was striving to achieve the top designation of AHS Master Judge.

Margot enjoyed bringing one of her other passions, photography, into the hosta gardens as well. She loved taking pictures of her own gardens and those that she visited. She was thrilled to have some of her photos published in *The Hosta Journal* and *Canadian Gardening*, and absolutely elated to have two photos selected for covers of *The Hosta Journal*.

On a smaller, local scale, Margot and Udo worked hard to ensure that everyone knew about their nursery. The London television station (A-channel) made several broadcasts from the nursery as well as invited Margot into their studio at the London Covent Garden Market as a guest speaker. Margot was invited to speak at numerous Garden Club meetings during the winter months, and often those groups would visit in the summer with a bus tour. In 2006 Hosta Choice Gardens was privileged to be a stop on the annual Mother's Day Shunpiker's tour. This day brought thousands of visitors to the gardens all within a few hours. Needless to say, it was the best day of business ever for the nursery.

Both of them loved meeting the various people that visited the gardens. So often I heard stories of "the nicest people", or "the most interesting couple", or "the customers who had driven over four hours to get there". My dad had a belief that anyone who was a hosta-lover must be a good person. And with this belief, he joyfully greeted as many customers as he could personally, then often visited with them at the picnic table while they had a coffee and cookie break.

It is not surprising that my parents were so successful in making their visions come true. My mother had always enjoyed making things. It was the process of starting something from scratch and then watching as it evolved, whether it was pottery, sewing, photography, or cooking. She saw the hosta nursery as the same thing...with the one exception of the money needed to start and then keep a nursery running. They both enjoyed the concept of being in "new territory" and always having something interesting to learn. They never guessed that they would someday have to learn commercial book-keeping, design and keep up a website, plan advertising campaigns and design ads, learn importing procedures, run a mail-order business, and hire and supervise staff. And, as the nursery grew so did their level of enjoyment.

Hosta Choice Gardens was always fully supported by the rest of the family. My sister and I always arrived for the opening weekend (and as often as possible throughout the season) to help greet customers, make coffee, or run the cash registers. Our husbands were put to work as they helped to pot thousands of plants, build polyhouses, spread woodchips in the pathways, and stand for hours on ladders putting up shade cloth. Udo delighted in taking the time to wander through the pathways with his granddaughter, Cara, reading hosta names. We believe that this is where she actually learned to read at the age of three by sounding out names with her Opa, such as 'Abba Dabba Do' and 'Blue Mouse Ears'. Amazingly, she is even able to identify a large variety of hostas!

I think both of my parents enjoyed running the nursery even more than they had ever thought possible. Their interest in hostas and gardening continued to grow as the nursery grew. The modest 100 varieties soon become more than 800 with approximately 50 000 pots of stock plants and plants for sale. Hosta Choice Gardens became more popular than they had ever dreamed could happen. The fan base grew from within a few hours drive to across North America with an exceptional mail-order business. What started as a great idea for a "project" to keep their minds and bodies active after retirement became a second career. Little did they realize that by turning a hobby into a business they were probably working just as hard (if not harder) than they had before retiring. Eventually, their staff grew from just the two of them to include four full-time university students who were employed from May through to September.

Margot was diagnosed with cancer in the summer of 2006. It was hard for her to step back from running the nursery while she was supposed to be resting and conserving her strength. To help her get through the painful treatments, a doctor suggested she visualize her "happy place". She said this was her hosta garden. During her courageous battle with cancer, Margot's hosta friends were always there to support her. Many who came to visit would stay and volunteer their time and help out in the nursery. After Udo's unexpected death from a massive heart attack in May of 2007, Hosta Choice could not have stayed open without the assistance of friends. I know Margot and Udo were very grateful for the kindness shown to them in difficult times. And, Udo would be the first to point out that this was as expected, as all hosta-lovers are good people!

I don't think my parents would have changed anything about their business, if they had the chance. They loved what they were doing and they loved doing it together. They loved their customers who helped to make the nursery what it was. They treated their plants as though they were their children, and they treated customers as though they were family. Udo and Margot found that they were first interested mainly in hostas, and then discovered that the real bonus was the wonderful people they met over the years because of the hostas.

Since that first conversation about hostas with my mother, I have learned that the hostas under the crabapple trees are *H. 'lancifolia'*. My mother has often mentioned that her favourite variety was *H. 'Gold Standard'* and I know that she also had a soft spot for *H. 'Moonlight Sonata'*. My father was a fan of *H. 'Whirlwind'*, *H. 'Praying Hands'*, and *H. 'Abba Dabba Do'* (no doubt because of his granddaughter's innate reading ability). These six varieties will always have a special place in my garden.

Udo and Margot are dearly missed by their daughters, Susan and Karen, sons-in-law Nino and David, grandchildren Cara, Luca, and Evan, sister Inge and family, and all of the dear friends that they met through their common love of hostas.

***Written by Karen Dargatz-Wu, in collaboration with Susan DiTeodoro, and Marlit and Doug Young. Parts of this article were taken from documents written over the years by Margot and from the article about her which appeared in The Hosta Journal (written by Larry Tucker)***





## **FEEL LIKE A SPRING BREAK?**

**The American Hosta Society Annual Hosta College is coming up  
March 14 - 15, 2008 in Piqua, Ohio**

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Hosta College. Gardeners from the United States, Canada and Europe come together to learn and share various gardening experiences

Visit <http://www.ihostohio.org/portal/glhc/> for further details

## **Can We See Your Garden?**

We are always on the look out for new gardens to visit - commercial or private for our bus tours or picnic/seminars. If you know of such a garden, or would welcome a visit by the members of the Society, please contact

Bob Leask     [rleask@hotmail.com](mailto:rleask@hotmail.com)

We have received several interesting suggestions for the “Name that Hosta” contest.

Don’t miss out on having your chance—send an e-mail to [hostaed@rogers.com](mailto:hostaed@rogers.com) or drop your suggestion/s in the box at the Winter meeting in February.

## **“NAME THAT HOSTA”**

### **Our 2008 OHS Club Plant needs a Name**

We introduced you to this new Hosta in Summer 2005.

The best description is that it is a Streaked Halcyon.



### **RULES:**

1. The contest is open until May 31st. A suggestion box will be available at our Winter meeting or you can e-mail the Editor at [hostaed@rogers.com](mailto:hostaed@rogers.com)
2. After careful consideration by the Executive, 3 names will be presented to the members at the Auction in September.
3. The member whose hosta name is chosen will receive a gift of the newly named hosta.

## Please look at your address label.

If your label states 12/07, your 2008 subscription is now due.

Subscriptions are for 1 or 3 years, ending December 31st of a year.

\$15.00/year or \$40.00 for 3 years  
(see page 2 for the subscription address)



## **Upcoming Events - 2008**

### Winter Meeting with Mark Zilis

**When:** Sunday, 24th February  
**Where:** Toronto Botanical Gardens—Garden Room  
**Time:** 12.30—4.00 p.m. (light refreshments)  
**Addr:** 777 Lawrence Ave. East

### Bus Tour

**When:** Sunday, 22nd June  
**Where:** TBA

### South Western Picnic

**When:** Sunday, 10th August  
**Where:** **The Potting Shed - Cayuga**  
**Time:** 11.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m.  
**Addr:** TBA

### 2008 Hosta Auction

**When:** Saturday/Sunday, 13/14th September  
**Where:** Toronto Botanical Gardens—Garden Room  
**Time:** **TBA**  
**Addr:** 777 Lawrence Ave. East,

# Ontario Hosta Society



## JANUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER

Visit us at  
[www.ontariohostasociety.com](http://www.ontariohostasociety.com)

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