



ONTARIO HOSTA SOCIETY

SPRING 2008 NEWSLETTER.

VOLUME 14 ISSUE 2

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—————
*Please look at your
address label—if it has no
date or 12/07 next to your
name, your membership
fees are due.*

*You won't want to miss the
next newsletter.*

PRESIDENTIAL MUSINGS

Well, we got through another Ontario winter. More brutal than the past few that I can remember snow wise BUT, our gardens should emerge in full glory with all of that snow cover and a wonderful spring drink to get things going.

Wasn't that just an amazing Winter Meeting? Mark Zilis was sensational and I think everyone just got into the spirit of the day. That room was electrically charged. So much fun, so much information, so much camaraderie. Wonderful!

As we are all out working in our gardens now, I will keep this short (most of us have been in the mud for at least two weeks before press time I am sure.)

I just can't wait until June. Bob's wrapped up our Bus Tour for this year. Always a wonderful day. Details are inside. (P.S. - Bob is still looking for an enthusiastic apprentice to mould into the future "Bus Tour Guru".)

(Continued on page 2)

Also, mark Sunday August 10th on your calendar for our South Western Ontario Picnic and the weekend of September 13/14 for our Hosta Auction at the TBG with none other than Mike Shadrack – stay tuned!

HAPPY SPRING HOSTA NUTS (PHILES) – I’M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ALL – **ON THE BUS!**

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
P.O. Box 7539
Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948-7539 U.S.A.**

E-mail:

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**

Upcoming Events for 2008

Bus Tour 2008

Sunday, June 22nd

see Page 4 for details

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

South Western Ontario Picnic—

Sunday, 10th August, 2008

The Potting Shed—Dunnville

Details in June newsletter

We Welcome our New Members

Kerry Burger	Scotland	Ontario
Ron Drury	Sarnia	Ontario
Kate Frieman	Toronto	Ontario
Suzanne Hanna	Sault St. Marie	Ontario
Lynne Jeffreys	Scarborough	Ontario
Shirley Macleod	Markham	Ontario
Loyd Quesada	Scarborough	Ontario

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

2008 BUS TOUR

DATE: Sunday, 22nd June

COST: \$35.00 per person

We will visit a rural estate in North Halton, a unique nursery nearby, followed by visits to urban gardens in south central Etobicoke. We will see diversity in the use of hostas in various settings and the companion plantings used to enhance them.....

PICK UP LOCATION: 9.00 a.m Landscape Ontario - located on 5th Line, Milton, just south of Steeles Ave. Exit 401 at Trafalgar Rd. or James Snow Parkway, go north to Steeles (5th Line is west of Trafalgar or east of James Snow Parkway).

There will be opportunities to purchase hostas and other special finds!

Bring a brown bag or picnic lunch—refreshments will be provided



BOB - I WANT TO GO!

Please complete this application if you want to join us on the 2008 bus trip. Complete the information below and mail with payment (\$35.00/person) to:

Bob Leask, RR #2, Georgetown, Ontario. L7G 4S5

DON'T BE DISAPPOINTED—SEND THIS IN RIGHT NOW!

NUMBER OF PEOPLE _____

NAMES _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

Hostas and other Shady Characters!

In the deep dark corners of your garden, you can find some pretty shady characters! Hostas are a staple in this setting, but if you look carefully you will see some other interesting friends nearby.

Hostas are leafy lush perennials that generally thrive in shade to part sun. They are sought after for their leaves, and their ability to thrive in shade, although, every year there are new introductions whose flowers are extremely fragrant, adding to the mix. These plants come in tiny form, like **Hosta Blue Mouse Ears**, or **Hosta Tiny Tears**, to gigantic, such as **Hosta Blue Umbrellas**, **Hosta Sum and Substance**, or **Hosta Old Faithful**. They can be used as edgers, or as large specimens, taking a special place of prominence in the garden.

The most striking feature of Hostas are the dramatic range of colour variation, and leaf type. They range through greens, blues, gold, and variegated forms. The leaves can be puckered, wrinkled, shiny, smooth, heavily veined and so on. Their stems can be green, or red. It is this immense range that drives collectors crazy, and starts one on the quest to have all the latest Hosta in your collection. Hostas love rich soil and moist conditions. They do best in shade, but some can tolerate sun if given continuous access to moisture. One surprising fact is that certain Hosta that tolerate both sun and shade, look like completely different plants when put in shade or sun. Try **Hosta Paul's Glory**, or **Hosta June**. In each case they do well, but look very different, with creams and blues in the shade, and sharper contrast with gold in the sun. It is fun to experiment.

In a moist shady setting, Hosta, Ferns and Astilbe are a great combination, along with Heuchera, and various other woodland plants. Combinations of color and contrasting forms create real drama in the garden. Ferns can come in a surprisingly wide array. **Ostrich Ferns** are huge and lush adding an almost tropical feel to the garden. **Japanese Painted ferns** add a colour contrast that is sometimes ghostly. The **Maidenhair Fern** is refined and lacelike, adding texture, while the **Autumn Fern** adds a bronze glow. Who new ferns were such interesting characters?

Heuchera also provide a range of colour and texture. While they flower, they are sought after for the impact of the leaf...adding a range of burgundy and red to the shade.....not the most retiring characters.

After you have populated your shady neighborhood with a cast of Hostas of all sizes, shapes and colours, and then broken up the “clique” with a few rowdy Ferns and showy Heuchera, you can begin to think of some of the other members of the family that will tolerate shade. Some grasses, such as **Northern Sea Oats**, and the **Japanese (golden) Hakonechloa** will do well in shade, as will some conifers. Add structure and impact with **Japanese Yew**, or a weeping **Hemlock**. Topping off the list of shady characters are a range of woodland plants, from **trillium, to winterberry** and more, add that final touch. The shady characters in our garden are the ones who bring it to life, give it mystery and surprise. So when you turn that dark corner, watch out for the surprising shady characters you may meet....they are all pretty interesting, and certainly all memorable!

Contributed by

Dave Dunn

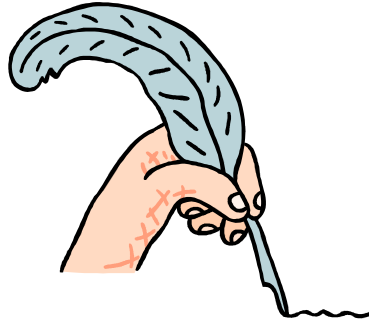
www.rideauwoodlandramble.com

613-258-3797

210 Burritt's Rapids Rd

Merrickville Ontario

PLEASE SEE COLOUR INSERT FOR SOME GREAT PICS!



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

Thank you for contributions already received—we will use them in future newsletters—new articles are always welcome!

Timely tip following Spring Cleanup and planting

Tired of dirty nails, even if you use gloves? Make a thick paste of Polident by crushing one in a little water and rub this under the nails and on your hands, leave for a little, a little scrubbing with a nail brush and hey presto, Clean hands and nails!



“HOSTAS OF DISTINCTION”

OHS Meeting February 24th, 24, 2008

With Guest Speaker— Mark Zilis

Mark Zilis and his wife and 4 children are the owners of Q & Z Nursery Inc., in Rochelle, IL. The nursery is a leading supplier of hostas to the wholesale nursery market. Mark has been involved in the cultivation of hostas for 30 years and has traveled to Japan 3 times to study hostas.

It was as an undergraduate in the University of Illinois that Mark was first introduced to hostas. As a graduate student he was involved in plant tissue culturing of trees and shrubs. His professor was involved in tissue culturing hostas.

In 1977 Mark was hired at Dennis Walters Gardens in Zeeland Michigan to run a new tissue culture lab, tissue culturing perennials. In 1978 he began tissue culturing hostas. At the time there was only one small Tissue Culture lab owned by Mark Cunningham. There Mark learned how to get sterile hostas in culture to multiply. With mums, 100 new plants could be cultured in 4 weeks. With hostas, 3-6 new plants could be produced in 4-6 weeks, plants such as *H. plantaginea* and *H. lancifolia*.

In tissue culture propagation tiny plant pieces from the crown of the plant are washed many times, sterilized, then placed in test tubes in a sterile medium where they grow for 6 weeks into tiny plantlets. Mark was later sent to Larry Englerth in Michigan where there was a collection of 200 hostas. New hostas were selected for TC such as *H. Gold Regal*, *H. Gold Edger*, *H. Gold Drop*, *H. Francee*, *H. Green Gold*.

In 1980 The American Hosta Society invited Mark to speak at their convention. There Mark got to visit some of the best collections. *H. montana Aureomarginata* at Ken Anderson's garden stood out. As a result, Mark started collecting hostas.

In 1981 Mark was culturing about 30 different hostas. Hostas were cultured, established in greenhouses, then transferred to fields for 2-3 years before being sold to wholesale customers. In the same year Mark left Walter's Gardens, Clarence Falstad III took his position. Mark opened T & Z Nurseries, a retail operation involving tissue culture in herbaceous plants, hostas, annuals, trees and shrubs.

Paul Aden invited Mark to come and speak as he felt there was a demand for hostas, Paul went to Klem's Nurseries and convinced them that he (Paul) had the plants to TC and that Klehm's had the customers. In the 1980's Klehm's ruled the market with their full colour catalogue. Through the 1980's Mark could not keep up. He started in the "liner" business (96 1½" cells per tray). His business grew in leaps and bounds. Customers soon wanted specific plants, in the 1990's demanding new hostas from new sources. As T & Z Nurseries started propagating new hostas they soon started finding sports in culturing. Mark also soon realized that hostas with "flashy" names sold well.

In 1992 T & Z Nurseries was split. Mark retained the tissue culture part of the company. His business now consists of 43 acres, 6-7 acres which are being used, 6 greenhouses and 2 tissue culture labs. He sells flats of 96 cells, 2¼" pots and 4" pots of hostas. Shipments are sent out twice a day. In Mark's hybridization program, he likes to wait 10-12 years to appreciate fully mature plants, but will introduce them in 4-5 years.

In 1983 Mark started working on "The Hosta Handbook" which he completed in 2000. Mark is now working on a hosta encyclopedia with reference to over 7000 hostas. Some hostas will have complete descriptions while others will just be mentioned. This book will be 9 inches by 12 inches, 7 ½ pounds and will have 1900 photos and 1100 pages. It is expected to be published in April.

Today hostas are the number one perennial. There are over 7000 hostas to date with 300-400 new hostas being found each year in gardens and in TC. Sources of new hostas are hybridization, mutation selection and collection in the wild (Japan).

Most hosta flowers open in the middle of the night around 2 am. To hybridize, the flower must be emasculated (remove all the petals) during the night. The pollen is placed on the plant at about 10 a.m. in the morning. After 42 days the seed pod is fully mature. The seed can be taken out right away and planted or left to dry and stored in the fridge or freezer. Germination temperatures should not be too hot, around 65F-70F. July is too hot to germinate seed.

In sporting of hostas, *H. Gold Standard* throws about 10% sports in culture. *H. Ghost Spirit* has a white centred sport, while there have been no sports of *H. plantaginea* in culture.

There are 40 native species of hosta found in Japan, Korea and China. The climatic zones in Japan are basically the same as those in the US and in Ontario. A typical day in Japan is overcast and humid in the summer, ideal for growing hostas.

Hostas in Japan are found growing along the edge of water and along the edges of treed areas. There are no hostas found growing on the side of Mt. Fuji, only along the base in the grasslands. People look for and collect hostas in this area. During their search, the Watanabe family may find 2 new variegated hostas each day.

H. montana and *H. sieboldii* are found in bright areas along the edges of roads. *H. montana* *Aureomarginata* emerges early so it most likely originated in a low lying area.

Hostas at M. Fuji base are late coming up: *H. montana* *ginrei*, *H. montana* *Choko Nishiki*, *H. rectifolia* *Fuji Botan* (double flowering hybrid of *H. sieboldii*).

H. pycnophylla was found in deep woods on Oshima Island in the Inland Sea/ It was thought that the white back found on this hosta was to reflect heat from rocks yet this hosta was found growing in deep shade. The flowers are recumbent—almost horizontal.

In 2006 Mark revisited Japan, traveling north to the Aomori Prefecture. There the climate is cooler and the area is rural. In the native habitat was found *H. rectifolia* *Tachi Giboshi* growing side by side with Jewel Weed which also grows side by side with Poison Ivy. A sport of *H. rectifolia* was also found. *H. Ginbuchi Tachi* is very upright, small, 20 inches tall with a 5 x 7 inch leaf. Mark is hoping to have it available at Q & Z Nurseries this year. Mark is crossing red petioled hostas with *H. rectifolia* to obtain vertical plants.

While in Japan, Mark met Mr. Kimio Muroya of Hirosaki Japan. He is a 50 year collector of variegated plants, specializing in hostas.

A few other hostas found in this area were *H. Ginba Giboshi* which is known as *H. Krossa Regal* in North America, *H. Opirara* a variegated *H. rectifolia*, and *H. Amime Tachi* another form of *H. rectifolia* which has white veins.

Many Japanese hosta names include descriptive terms. *Ogon* means gold, *nishiki* means streaked. *Ogon* is used in *H. longipes*, *H. venusta*, *H. rectifolia*. Eg.: *H. venusta* *Ogon Otame*, *H. rectifolia* *Ogon Tachi*, *H. sieboldii* *Ogon Koba*. Cultivars have been now named *H. Wogon Gold*, *H. Wogon*, *H. venusta* *Ogon Otame* is now more specifically known as *H. venusta* *Golden Maid*.

Japanese hostas are also sometimes named for their location of origin. *H. sieboldii* *Aichi*, *H. montana* *Mount Daisen*, *H. Oze Giboshi* which has a white flower with extra flower parts. (Mark has used it to cross with *H. Sum & Substance*), *H. Saishu Jima*, *H. Ani Machi* (sold as *H. Geisha*), *H. Kisuji* a streaked hosta with no substance, *H. Kinbotan* a sport of *H. venusta*, *H. Uzu-no-Mai* (a tiny hosta found growing in volcanic soil) and *H. Sagae*.

In China *H. lancifolia* is native although it is actually found to be very common in Japan.

Hostas combine nicely with other native plants. Virginia Bluebells grow well with hostas as they grow and flower before the hostas are up. As the bluebells die back, the hostas take over. Scillas also combine well with hostas, flowering and dying back before the hostas show.

The following hostas Mark feels are distinct and very worthy to grow:

H. ventricosa is the only hosta that comes true to seed.

H. plantaginea flowers open around 6-8pm. Hybrids of *H. plantaginea* may flower slightly later around 8:30 pm. *H. Sweet Susan* blooms around 9-10 pm. From *H. plantaginea* have come *H. Fragrant Bouquet* (Paul Aden) which yielded *H. Guacamole* then *H. Stained Glass*.

H. Gold Standard found in the 1970's is the greatest mutator. From it we have such hostas as *H. Richland Gold*, *H. Moonlight* – *H. Captain Kirk*, *H. Striptease* to *H. Gypsy Rose*, *H. White Bikini*, *H. Risky Business*, *H. Hanky Panky* (which is still not stable yet), *H. Silver Eagle* which is a more subtle *H. Stiptease*, *H. Kiwi Full Monty*.

H. Golden Tiara was found in the 1970's by Bob Savory. It yielded *H. Golden Septre*, *H. Platinum Tiara*, *H. Emerald Tiara*, *H. Diamond Tiara*, *H. Grand Tiara* a tetraploid form which in turn gave us *H. Grand Prize*.

H. Sum & Substance has given us *H. Lady Isobel Barnett*, *H. Sum of All*, *H. Eagle's Nest* which is a slow growing tetraploid and *Loadstar*.

H. Halcyon has sported to *H. June*, *H. Touch of Class* which is a tetraploid, *H. First Frost* and *H. Valeries Vanity*.

H. Blue Mouse Ears is a tetraploid form of *H. Blue Cadet* (Mark Zilis 1980's). It has given us *H. Royal Mouse Ears*, *H. Frosted Mouse Ears* (Q & Z), *H. Holy Mouse Ears* and *H. Green Mouse Ears*.

H. Purple Verticulated Elf is very distinct with up to 3 whirls of flowers per scape.

H. Oh My Heart (Ran Lydell) has a cock's comb head of flowers with up to 400 blooms per scape. The stems are fasciated – flat and wide as if several stems have grown together.

H. Blue Angel has given us *H. Green Angel*.

H. Lake Superior which was introduced by Ran Lydell.

Mary Chastain has a great hosta breeding program. She has introduced such hostas as H. Lakeside Symphony, H. Lakeside Cha Cha and H. Lakeside Dragonfly.

H. Deep Blue Sea is a very intensely blue hosta introduced by Charlie Seaver

H. Spring Fling (Roy Herold) has a rippled white edge. It is a cross from H. Christmas Tree x H. Donahue Piecrust.

H. Jade Cascade from Dan Heims is a giant green deeply veined hosta.

H. Praying Hand is totally unique with its upright folded leaves that resemble someone's praying hands.

H. Totally Wacky (Jim Schwarz) is floppy with no substance.

H. Corkscrew with its thin twisted appearance.

H. Ginsu Knife (Bob Solberg) has an interesting serrated edge.

H. siboldiana Elegans 1905 (H. sieboldiana x H. tokodama) From this hosta we have received H. Frances Williams, H. Great Expectations, H. Northern Halo. H. Elegans has beautiful golden fall color.

H. Empress Wu has the largest leaf of any hosta to date. The green leaves can reach 17 x 22 and larger.

Olga Petryszyn has many popular large hostas. She is very particular in her hosta breeding program, only keeping the best of the best. She has hostas such as H. Key West, H. All That Jazz (H. Christmas Tree Gala x H. Elatior), H. Mardi Gras, H. Golden Gate, H. Dawn's Early Light, H. Manhattan, H. Niagara Fall, H. Hoosier Dome, H. Blue Hawaii, H. Chesapeake Bay, and H. Brother Stefan.

Ron Livingston and Stuart Asch produced H. Made You Look, H. Red Hot Poker, H. Seducer and H. Red Dragon.

Mark touched on some of the problems associated with hostas just as there are with most other plants. Slugs are a common problem which needs no explanation.

Dessication burn occurs in the spring when strong sunlight hits newly expanding leaves. This can be a problem on H. Borwick Beauty.

Foliar nematodes: Symptoms in hostas are lines between the veins turning light brown in July and August. Nematodes bury themselves in the crown of the plant then travel to the leaves. Heat kills adult foliar nematodes but a systemic insecticide is needed to kill the egg stage nematode. Systemic pesticides are banned in Canada. Mark is doing some testing on methods of using heat to destroy nematodes in plants in the ground.

Hosta Virus X: There is no cure. On green leaves it can imitate winter damage, causing the leaves to appear crinkled. On other leaves it looks like ink spots bleeding along the veins. It is spread by mechanical means only. Infected hostas must be carefully dug out and disposed of in the garbage, not composted. The soil should be dug out or disinfected with a 10% bleach solution. All implements must be disinfected as well.

Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus: Has small yellow spots. If caught early you can remove the leaves otherwise destroy the infected plant and clean tools with bleach.

Southern Blight: We may not have this here in Ontario. Symptoms are little white hairy balls at the base of the hosta. It infects the crown causing the leaves to fall away. Remove all leaves, remove white balls, dig up the plant and soak 2-3 hours in a 10% bleach solution. Dig out the soil and replant.

Hosta leaves should be cleaned up in the fall to remove any disease or overwintering insects.

There are numerous public and private gardens which are well worth visiting if you get the chance:

Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

Dubuque Arboretum and Botanical Garden Iowa

Missouri Botanical Gardens

Toledo Botanical Gardens

Wade & Gatton Nurseries in Belleville Ohio has over 3000 hostas

Peter and Jean Ruh, Homestead Division of Chesterland Ohio. They have H. Canadian Foreign Affairs which has scapes reaching 80 inches in height.

Ed Elslager's garden in Ann Arbor Michigan. Ed has recently passed away.

We would like to thank Mark Zilis and his son Andy for their wonderful visit, and for sharing with us their incredible talk and slide presentation. We are also anxiously looking forward to Mark's next book (even if we have to add wheels to it).

Contributed by: Olga Elchuk

(See colour insert for pictures of Mark's talk)

2008 OHS Hosta Suppliers List

Angelo's Garden Centre	Concord	Ontario	905 669 9220
Belgian Nursery	Breslau	Ontario	519 648 2608
Bonibrae Daylilies & Hostas	Blomfield	Ontario	613 393 2864
Bow-Ridge Farms	Fonthill	Ontario	905 892 4124
Canadale Nurseries	St. Thomas	Ontario	519 631 7264
Carrmen Martinez Landscaping	Kleinburg	Ontario	905 893 8122
Celtic Dream Garden	Stoney Creek	Ontario	905 643 6735
Chris Potze Perennials	Waterford	Ontario	519 443 5767
Crescent Nursery	Strathroy	Ontario	519 245 2457
Eagle Bay Hosta Nursery	Dunkirk	New York	716 366 8844
Ego's Nurseries	Coldwater	Ontario	705 326 9922
Evergreen Acres Nursery	Milton	Ontario	905 878 0475
Floral and Hardy	Moorfield	Ontario	519 638 3937
Frank Schenk Perennials	Belfountain	Ontario	519 927 5415
Gardens Plus	Peterborough	Ontario	705 742 5918
Glen Echo Nursery	Caledon	Ontario	905 584 9973
Goldenbrook Hostas	Blackstock	Ontario	905 986 4363
Handlebar Hosta Farms	Uxbridge	Ontario	905 852 7024
Harper's Garden Centre	Ancaster	Ontario	905 648 2157
Humber Nurseries	Brampton	Ontario	416 798 8733
Keltyn Woods	Paris	Ontario	519 759 8617
Koerts Hostas	Courtland	Ontario	519 688 5135
Lamrock's Country Garden	Port Perry	Ontario	905 985 5462
Olde Towne Gardens	Niagara-On-The-Lake	Ontario	905 937 6758
Plant Paradise	Albion	Ontario	905 880 9090
Plant World Ltd.	Toronto	Ontario	416 241 9174
Q & Z Nurseries Inc	Rochelle	Illinois	
Rideau Woodland	Merrickville	Ontario	613 258 3797
Somerset Gardens	Kinkora	P.E.I.	902 887 3306
The Potting Shed	Dunnville	Ontario	905 701 8921
Whitehouse Perennials	Almonte	Ontario	613 256 3406

News from the Hosta Adoption Program

The OHS hosta adoption program gives members who participate, a hosta plant to grow for 3 years. The “adoption parents” will observe how the plant grows and how it compares to its description. At the end of the 3rd year, the “parent” is allowed to keep a piece of the hosta and the plant is donated within the local community in the name of the OHS.

Nursing homes, community gardens and botanical gardens have all been recipients of the hostas. They can also be returned to the OHS for the September auction.

The OHS would love to see pictures of your adopted hostas and know where they have gone or are going. Please e-mail your photos to cindydeutekom@netscape.ca and we will try to publish the pictures in future newsletters.

Following is a list of this years “parents” and adoptee. Please e-mail Cindy and let her know the plants destination.

Jim Babinetz	-Cracker Crumbs	Linda Hing	-Moonstruck
Janet Badoli	-Lakeside Looking Gla	Shirley Koch	-Li'l Abner
Else Baker	-Allegany Fog	Allan Koch	-Royal Charm
Dave Barham	-Ghost Spirit	Saxon Lambert	-Olive Bailey Langdon
Ricki-Lee Baxter	-Goober	Norm Limpert	-Cheatin' Hea
Glenn Carter	-Li'l Abner	Pat Loy	-Lovely Loretta
Debbie Clark	-Judy Rocco	Maureen Marle	-Joyce Trott
Colbert	-Enterprise	Suzanne McGratton	-Wooly Mammoth
Garry Drew	-Old Coot	Julius Muhg	-Jewel of the Nile
Carol Edwards	-Opipara Koriyama	Kevin Plumley	-Rock Island Line
Kevin Elchuk	-Summer Olympics		-Sundance
Henry Hildebrandt	-Golden Task	Sandra S. Mahoney	-Twilight Time
Virginia Hildebrandt	-Alex Summers	Marilyn White	-First Frost
Maria Hilts	-Rosedale Lost Dutch..	Liisa Wolfram	-Heart & Soul

Avoiding Spring Frost Damage *by Ray Rodgers*

The anticipation and excitement of early spring - Spring is a joyous time for gardeners, a time of great anticipation as we start wandering around our gardens looking for signs of new beginnings. Such excitement must be tempered with the realization that freezing temperatures are always a possibility until approx. mid-May in Central Illinois. The average last frost date for Peoria is May 8. Every year, I hope spring will come in gracefully, without the major temperature swings we have come to expect. Unfortunately, this rarely has happened.

Last year was a prime example. After efforts to protect my rapidly unfurling hosta leaves on a couple of occasions, I thought those days were once again behind us when we reached the month of May, only to be surprised by an unexpected (to me) frost, that damaged gardens throughout the area on the night of May 2 / May 3.

Every spring, I give credit to *H. 'On Stage'* as being the smartest hosta in my garden: as it is the last hosta to emerge from winter dormancy, making it much less susceptible to frost damage.

When hostas should be protected - It is important to realize that hostas, even completely leafed out, can withstand temperatures below freezing (32° F). I have repeatedly read that hostas can handle temperatures down to 28° F for short times with minimal or no damage.

During winter, if I find exposed hosta buds, I scrape a little mulch or soil mix from the surrounding area over them for protection. In very early spring, if shoots are starting to emerge, I often cover them in the same manner, in an attempt to slow their progress and provide additional protection.

If shoots are a few inches or more tall, yet leaves have not started to unfurl or are still in the early stages, and temperatures below 30° F are forecasted, I suggest providing additional protection via a choice of mulch or dried leaves piled around and over the emerging shoots. Alternatively, one of the protective methods described below can be utilized.

The more leafed-out hostas are, the more susceptible they are to frost damage. In these cases, covering via one of the methods described below is the best alternative.

One must consider the uniqueness of their gardens and plant placements when determining whether to protect or not. Of course, part of the decision process is how much trust one has in the accuracy of the forecast. Isn't that a scary thought!

Plant protection - If one decides to protect, there are many options. Basically almost anything that can cover a hosta will help. It is important not to let the leaves touch the covering material as they are more likely to sustain freeze damage at that contact, if the temperature gets low enough.

There are many methods for protecting your plants via covering. Materials include:

- Plastic pots (crumpled newspaper covering drainage holes improves protection)
- Newspapers
- Cardboard boxes
- Frost Cloth* (fabric material available through nursery supply companies. Search the Internet for options.)
- Bed sheets*
- Bath towels*
- Light blankets*
- Burlap*
- Garbage cans
- Bushel baskets
- Wheelbarrows turned upside down

* Need to be propped up and anchored down. I try to keep a bundle of sticks or stakes around for props. I have also used covered sawhorses over larger hostas. Bricks and rocks are good anchors and also work well to hold down plastic pots during windy conditions.

Polyethylene film or similar materials, including plastic bags, should be avoided as condensation buildup on the inside can increase the likelihood of damage to hosta leaves. These materials are also a danger once the sun comes out.

Another method is to keep a continuous spray of water on plants when the temperature is below 28° F, as water is warmer than the air.

The morning after - After all the chosen plants are protected from the impending freezing temperature (usually during the night), one must address the uncovering task the following morning. Keeping the plants covered until the temperature climbs back above freezing is the best option. But, if one has to go to work, family or neighbors may have to be called upon for help. If the forecast calls for temperatures to remain in the danger zone, keep the plants covered.

How cold is too cold - This somewhat depends on the number of hostas one has to protect. If hostas are completely leafed out and the temperature dips into the low 20°s F, protective measures may reduce the severity, but it is unlikely that they will prevent freeze damage.

What should be done to frost damaged hostas - If hostas are hit by damaging frosts it is best to cut off and discard the most significantly damaged leaf tissue (sanitizing the cutting tool between plants), keeping as many of the undamaged leaves and petioles as possible to allow the continuation of the plant's food making process. At some point, if enough leaves are removed, hostas will force a second flush of leaves from smaller and previously dormant buds. This flush will likely produce smaller leaves.

Even worse than hosta leaves turning to mush, is the possibility of the crown being damaged, which if not attended to, typically allows rot to set in. The crown of the hosta is the base where the roots and shoots join. Crown rot can happen in early spring when water stands around the crown or by the plant freezing after it breaks dormancy. If hostas sustain significant leaf damage, be sure to check the crown for soft areas. If discovered, this tissue should be removed back to solid tissue to prevent further rot and possibly the death of the plant.

Which hostas are most frost sensitive - Late freezes can be a problem with any variety, especially the ones that break dormancy early. The species *H. plantaginea* and its sports have the reputation of being the most frost sensitive. It is widely believed all fragrant hostas have *H. plantaginea* in their lineage, making them candidates for protection. *H. plantaginea* is one of the only species that will continue to produce new leaves all summer long. This is an advantage when the original spring foliage becomes damaged. Contrarily, I have read that hostas in the Sieboldiana Group and Tokudama Group are slow to recover from frost damage, as they tend to push only one good flush of growth in a season, also making hostas with these lineages, good candidates for protection. A few other of the more sensitive hostas include *H. montana* 'Aureomarginata', 'Sagae', 'Lancifolia', and 'Chinese Sunrise'.

New purchases - If hostas are purchased prior to mid-May, I suggest leaving them in pots so they can easily be moved to a protected area when frost warnings occur.

Is it worth the effort - Protecting hostas from freezing temperatures is certainly a hassle. Each of us has to determine for ourselves whether it is worth the effort and when to take protective measures. In my opinion, we must always be aware of the possibility of freezing temperatures and react accordingly to preserve the beauty of our gardens.

The American Hosta Society ***2008 National Convention***

in

St. Louis , Missouri

June 11—14th

with optional wine and/or botanical garden tours

Go to **<http://www.stlouishosta.org/2008/2008.htm>**
for details and registration form

(early registration deadline April 30th)



Upcoming Events - 2008

Bus Tour

When: Sunday, 22nd June
Where: North Halton and South Central Etobicoke—see this newsletter

South Western Picnic

When: Sunday, 10th August
Where: **The Potting Shed - Dunnville**
Time: 11.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m.
Addr: 44 Haldimand Road 17 Dunnville

2008 Hosta Auction

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

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SPRING 2008 NEWSLETTER

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