



# Hosta Happenings

SEPTEMBER 2009

Vol. 13,

## **M.V.H.S.**

**ANNUAL PICNIC  
SUNDAY, SEPT. 20, 2009  
3:30 P.M.**

**VANDERVEER BOTANICAL PARK  
(IN THE HOSTA GLADE)  
215 W. Central Park  
Davenport, Iowa**

(we will use the stone house in case of rain)

**Please bring a dish to share, a chair and  
your own table service! Our club will  
furnish chicken and soft drinks!**

We will have H. 'Holy Mouse Ears' and H. 'Frosted Mouse Ears' plants for sale.

# ????DID YOU KNOW????

from "Great Expectations", Central Illinois Hosta Society

## Hosta

- Walters Gardens Inc. (tissue-culture lab & wholesale nursery) donates 25 cents for every plant sold of *H. 'Remember Me'* to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. Contributions have exceeded \$27,000.
- Grown in more shade, hosta leaves will be bigger, yet fewer.
- Hostas will grow faster in the sun vs. shade if given sufficient water. They may not look good though.
- Hostas grow best in moist, well-drained, highly organic soils with a pH between 5.5 and 7.5.
- Leaf mold (shredded decomposing leaves) makes excellent mulch, yet larger; slowly decaying heavy wet leaves provides fungus, bacteria, and insects a perfect environment to grow. *Editor's Note: I make leaf mold by running the leaves through a mower once or twice.*
- All forms of decaying mulch should be kept away from hosta crowns to avoid crown and/or petiole rot.
- According to Bob Solberg, Green Hill Farm, hosta leaves can be tested by most State Labs to determine the amount of nutrients that actually are available in the plant, not just in the soil.
- Dividing hostas is a choice, not a requirement.
- When dividing a hosta, if one or more of the divisions do not have enough roots to support the plant, characterized by droopy leaves and/or petioles, it is advisable to cut the top half of the leaves off.
- The first hosta to be granted a Patent was *H. 'Royal Standard'* dated January 19, 1965.
- Hostas are completely dormant during the winter.
- In the sentence, "I have lots of hostas in my garden," the use of the word "hostas" is correct; using "hosta" would be incorrect. See Rules for the Rendition of Genus, Species and Cultivar Names. <http://www.americanhostasociety.org/pdf/rulesforhostanames20060604.pdf>.
- Foliar nematode damage appears between the veins of hosta leaves (never crosses) as dying and dead tissue, initially resulting in brown stripes progressively fading to just a slight discoloration. Eventually, the area will completely brown-out. Additional detail and pictures can be found at: <http://www.americanhostasociety.org/nematodes.html>.

## . Trees

- Trim oak trees in the winter, not the summer, to avoid the incurable deadly oak wilt disease.
- Although it may take years, adding a few extra inches of soil under oak trees could eventually completely suffocate / kill the tree. Decaying mulch does not have the same effect as the heavier soil.
- During prolong drought, watering trees is more important than watering lawns. Lawns can go dormant, trees can not.
- When trees are hit by mowers, weed-eaters, etc., permanent damage to the tree will likely occur. Create a mulch ring around all trees grown in grassy areas.
- The canopy of an ash tree infested with Emerald Ash Borer begins to thin above infested portions of the trunk and major branches because the borer destroys the water and nutrient conducting tissues under the bark. Heavily infested trees exhibit canopy die-back usually starting at the top of the tree. Sometimes ash trees push out sprouts from the trunk after the upper portions of the tree dies. Although difficult to see, the adult beetles leave a "D"-shaped exit hole in the bark, roughly 1/8 inch in diameter, when they emerge in June.
- The adult beetle emerald ash borer is dark metallic green in color, 1/2 inch-long and 1/8 inch wide.
- The EAB is thought to have arrived in ash wood used for stabilizing cargo in ships or for packing or crating heavy consumer products.

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## **HOSTA QUESTION AND ANSWER**

by Ann Bentsen, Georgia Hosta Society Newsletter

### **How do you care for hostas in the fall?**

Fall is when seedpods are formed and the plants start adding roots for next year. Hostas should receive 2" of water per week in the fall. That is what hostas receive in their native Japan; however, hosta rhizomes don't like standing water so provide good drainage. Lightly fertilize your plants in the fall as you are watering them. Cut off the leaves as soon as there is a sign they are receding. Getting rid of the dead foliage will reduce the possibility of pests or insect eggs wintering in the decaying leaves. Put the foliage in the garbage, not the compost pile, to get rid of pest eggs. (Note: If there are signs of nematodes, cut the leaves as soon as there are signs, even in July or August). Put out slug bait in fall and in late winter to clean up slugs and snails.

# When Do I Cut Back?

from Hornbaker's Fall Newsletter

We get quite a few questions about when to cut back certain plants. Often, people are under the impression that they should be cutting back a plant in the late summer or fall when, in fact, there is no need to cut it back at all, unless they are digging and dividing it. Just as you leave foliage on your tulips and daffodils until it dries up, in order to let the foliage feed the bulbs as long as possible, you should generally leave foliage on your perennials in order to feed the roots. (This is not to say, however, that you shouldn't cut back spent bloom stalks, and even some foliage, on many perennials earlier in the season in order to promote a new flush of bloom and foliage.) Here is some advice on some of the most asked-about plants:

**Irises:** There is no need to cut the foliage back unless you are digging and dividing them. The foliage can be kept looking nice if you spray periodically with a fungicide during the growing season. Cut off the bloom stalk down low when the bloom is over, but leave the foliage alone. If the foliage starts looking ratty on the tips in late summer, you can cut off the brown tips, but don't go too far into the green. That green is feeding the rhizomes.

**Peonies:** Again, there is no need to cut off the foliage. If you like to get your garden cleaned up before winter, cut the foliage off after a hard frost. If you like to use your energy more efficiently (i.e. you are a lazy gardener, like me), you can pick up the old foliage next spring without having to cut anything off.

**Buddleia, Caryopteris, Perovskia:** Woody perennials such as these should generally not be cut back until spring. The woody part of the Buddleia (Butterfly Bush) usually dies off completely over the winter, and the new growth comes up from the roots, although sometimes you get some growth coming from down low on the wood. For some reason, the plant seems to overwinter more successfully if you don't cut it back until spring. On the other two, Caryopteris (Blue Mist Spirea) and Perovskia (Russian Sage), new spring growth will come from the wood. Often, the tips have died back and much of the new growth comes from the lower portion of the plant. Wait until spring to cut them back. Otherwise, you may get more dieback from the point where you cut, if you cut them back in the fall. We usually cut Perovskia back to 10"-12", and cut back that portion of the Caryopteris that doesn't leaf out.

**Hydrangeas:** In order to keep the Hydrangeas shorter and sturdier, we generally cut them back to about knee-high in the spring. Cutting them back in the fall can result in further dieback, so wait until spring to shorten them.

## PREDICTING THE FIRST FROST

taken from the book, "365 days of Gardening"  
by Christine Allison

Part of fall gardening is about gearing up for the first frost and no right-minded gardener would put his crops in the hands of the weatherman. In earlier days, farmers listened for the chirping patterns of katydids to predict fall frost, and did so with remarkable accuracy.

Descending temperatures numb the katydid (like so many other insects) and temporarily cut off the strength and duration of the call. You can hear it working through its stages. It becomes katie at 65 degrees, kate at 58 degrees and then total silence when the temperature goes below 55 degrees. This year, listen for it. By the time you hear "Kate", a cool morning is in the making.

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## FRIED GREEN TOMATOES

6 medium green tomatoes, cut in 1/4" slices  
1-1/2 cups buttermilk  
1 cup yellow cornmeal  
1/2 cup unbleached flour  
1 tablespoon salt  
Freshly ground pepper  
2 teaspoons cayenne, or to taste  
1/4 cup peanut oil  
1/4 cup vegetable oil

Dip the sliced tomatoes in buttermilk. In a separate bowl mix the cornmeal, flour and seasonings together. Dredge the tomatoes in the cornmeal mixture and lay in a single layer on a platter. Heat the oils in a very large frying pan. Saute the tomatoes over medium heat until golden on each side. Drain towers and serve immediately.

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**HERB CUTTINGS** - Take some cuttings from your herb garden to grow indoors. Basil, hyssop, mint and rosemary will root in water or sand for new plants.

## Southern Blight

by Mary Schindler - from the *Hostas of Kentuckiana* newsletter

The high humidity and rainfall that is so common in Kentucky causes hosta crown rot or Southern Blight in hostas (*Sclerotium rolfsii*). You may not even notice you have the fungus until your favorite hosta collapses overnight. But the first sign of disease is when the lower leaves turn yellow. A mushy decay can be seen at the base of the petiole and with close inspection, you can see the white threads or fungal mycelium on the rotted petiole or at the base of the diseased plant. The yellowed leaves detach easily from the crown. The round sclerotia (compact masses of mycelium) are how the fungus survives for long periods in the soil before infecting the plant. These appear as tiny white, or tan balls the size of mustard seeds scattered or in clusters around the base of the fungal plant and can spread around the garden as you dig and transplant hostas. Therefore, it is important to thoroughly wash contaminated soil from tools and dip the tools in a 10% bleach solution. Also remove the dead leaves from the garden, don't put them in the compost pile.

Studies have been done that indicate hardwood mulch clumped too close to the hosta crowns may make hostas more susceptible to the disease. Once the signs appear, a drench of 10% household bleach solution will slow the fungus. Some experts even recommend drastic measures like discarding the hosta and the surrounding contaminated soil. But as in all types of lawn and garden fungi, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. As Southern blight seldom occurs before June, treating your hosta crowns early in the summer before you see signs of Southern Blight with a good garden fungicide can save a lot of heartache. A highly effective, preventative fungicide is tebuconazole found in "Bayer All-In-One Rose & Flower Care" which is readily available in the garden supply store. "Bayer All-In-One Rose & Flower Care" is a systemic fertilizer, insect control and fungal control. The plants I treated with it came back just fine the next year. So don't panic. The instructions say you just mix it in a watering can and pour at the plant base.



## Some Great Plants for Shade for August and September

by George Papadelis, Telly's Greenhouse, Troy, MI

### AUGUST

Clematis, heracleifolia. Many varieties are now available. Good for shade and interesting.  
Ceratostigma or plumbago. Very underused for late season, short color. Great fall color.  
Chelone or Pink Turtlehead. Available in white also. Height varies by species.

### SEPTEMBER

Anemone japonica. This isn't new but foliar nematodes are. Watch out for this one.  
Tricyrtis. Many new flowers and foliar varieties. Great for extending the season.  
Tricyrtis 'Gilty Pleasures' is a newer variety and had all gold foliage.  
Karengeshoma or Yellow Wax Bells. Great late season bloomer for foliage and flowers.  
Cimicifuga 'Hillside Black Magic' has incredible black, finely cut leaves. Fragrant flowers.  
Colchicum. More and more popular for late season color on a short plant.

THE OCTOBER 11th PROGRAM IS GOING TO BE A PANEL DISCUSSION, "LEARNING TOOLS - HOW TO GROW HOSTAS". THERE WILL ALSO BE A Q & A SESSION..... So be thinking of some questions you'd like to ask -- hopefully, they'll be able to answer them!



# MISSISSIPPI VALLEY HOSTA SOCIETY

presents

## Speaker - **Mark Zilis**

Author of the Hostapedia and The Hosta Handbook



**When:** Nov 8, 2009 – 2:00 pm

**Where:** Scott County Extension

875 Tanglefoot Lane, Bettendorf, Iowa

**No Charge:** Compliments of the Mississippi Valley Hosta Society

Mark is a nationally known expert on hosta and author of the most current hosta resource book. He has introduced dozens of hosta -- Sugar and Cream, Pineapple Upsidedown Cake, Summer Breeze to name just a few.

**Topic: 'Hosta Highlights'..** will cover hostas from Japan, hybridizing, tissue culture, hosta sports (new variations), current problems and will be open to audience questions.

## OVER WINTERING HOSTAS IN NURSERY POTS

by Mary Bardens

It happens to all of us. At some point in our gardening life, we don't get all of our plants planted. Fall comes, big end of season sales, life happens, then winter shows up and we still have plants sitting in black nursery pots. Not only are you looking at money spent, but you really wanted those hostas. And now you need them off of the sidewalk so you don't hit them with the snow blower.

Hostas can be over wintered in those pots in a few different ways. As temperatures drop, the plant will start to go dormant. The leaves will yellow and die back. Cut off the leaves and discard; don't compost. Be sure to sterilize your tools between plants in a 10% bleach solution to avoid spreading anything contagious. Allow the plants to continue getting the same moisture as the in-ground plants. Don't let them dry out prior to storage as they will need some moisture to get them through the winter. Check the pot bottoms for slugs and their little white pearl slug eggs so they don't over winter with the hosta.

Plants in gallon pots will survive better than in smaller pots due to the increased insulation of the soil around the roots. Soils that are too heavy with clay or peat will hold too much moisture and can cause root rot.

**TIP 'EM** If you are over wintering the pots outside and you don't have a cold frame, one way is to dig a shallow trench before the ground freezes. After the hostas are dormant, place them in the trench at an angle to keep water from pooling on the surface. They can also be leaned against something like a landscape timber. You will want to keep the pots from thawing and freezing, so a cover of pine branches can be used. Or, a white insulating blanket designed just for this purpose can be placed over the pots and secured. Black plastic would cause too much heat and thawing could occur.

**BURY 'EM** Dig a hole to bury at least 3/4 of the pot in the ground. Again, a white insulating blanket over the pots and a piece of plywood weighted down over that to keep out extra moisture and critters.

**STASH 'EM IN AN UNHEATED BUILDING** An unheated garage, shed or barn works very well for winter hosta storage. In this environment they can be put on shelves or on the floor. Place the pots in the coldest part of the building, such as the north side, to reduce the chance of premature thawing. A little mouse bait would be a good idea if the area is not critter proof or patrolled by a cat. About mid winter, or if the pots appear very dry, you will need to add some moisture, but not too much. This can be done by placing a few ice cubes in each pot, or a snowball if available. The normal winter temperature fluctuations should cause the ice or snow to melt slowly enough to add some moisture without drowning the roots.

**SPRING THAW** Now things will get interesting. You will have to be aware of the spring temperatures. If it gets too warm where the plants are being stored, they will prematurely sprout. Then you will end up with pale, gangly leaves that will be too tender for outside fluctuating temperatures. Ideally, you should move the pots back outside, or uncover if already outside, prior to their spring thaw so that they wake up slowly and naturally. You should be able to cover up the pots if it rains and then freezing temperatures occur. You don't want ice pooling in the top of the pot.

Be aware that not all hostas emerge at the same time. Just as in your garden, some will lag behind. Give the plants a chance, have a little faith, and make yourself the same solemn promise you did last year: "This year I will get everything in the ground by Labor Day". Good Luck!

**AHS DUES:** The American Hosta Society offers participation in all national activities, including a convention, 3 issues of "The Hosta Journal", and a directory. They also have a web page - [www.hosta.org](http://www.hosta.org). Dues are \$30/yr, \$57/2 yrs and \$600 life for an individual. Family memberships are also available at \$34/yr and \$62/2 yrs. Make your check to AHS and send to the Membership Secretary, Sandie Markland, 8702 Pinnacle Rock Ct., Lorton, VA 22079.

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**Midwest Regional Hosta Society Dues** are \$10/yr. Send your check to: Peter Postlewaite, Treasurer, 21172 Andover Rd., Kildeer, IL 60047.

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**MISSISSIPPI VALLEY HOSTA SOCIETY DUES** are \$7/YR. Please make your check payable to MVHS and send to Dean Piatt, Treasurer, 2910 Telegraph Rd., Davenport, IA 52804. We offer 8 newsletters a year, reduced prices on hosta offerings, garden walks, first opportunity to buy plants at our annual hosta and plant sale and many other good opportunities.

**WHAT'S HAPPENING!**

- Sept 20** - Annual Picnic, VanderVeer Hosta Glade
- Oct 4** - Friends of Riverside Park Gardens, Moline, Fall Plant Sale, 12N-3 PM
- Oct 11** - MVHS Meeting - 6 PM  
Riverdale Fire Station
- Nov 8** - Mark Zilis, IA Extension Office, 2 PM

Visit our MVHS Web Site: **[mvhosta.org](http://mvhosta.org)**

Other hosta and garden web sites:  
American Hosta Society - <http://www.hosta.org>  
Midwest Hosta Society - <http://www.midwesthostasociety.org>  
Hosta Library - <http://www.hostalibrary.org>  
Hosta Forum - questions/answers - <http://forums.gardenweb.com/forums/hosta>  
Mini Hosta Forum - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/minihosta>

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**LET US KNOW!!! IF YOU HAVE MOVED or HAS YOUR EMAIL CHANGED?**

**Send your corrected info to DEAN PIATT, 2910 TELEGRAPH RD., DAVENPORT, IA 52804.** His email is: [dpiatt@mvhosta.org](mailto:dpiatt@mvhosta.org)

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