



Shady Notes

Volume 18, Issue 8

October, 2017



President Diana Plahn

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Hosta Lovers:

Fall has officially arrived via the calendar, but you sure cannot tell it by our weather! It's hot and humid, with no rain for our gardens, especially our hostas.

This is the time to water, water, and water some more. Especially all those hostas and companion plants that you have moved around or those put in new flower beds. All of your plantings need to be established as soon as possible.

According to the Master Gardeners at the Missouri Botanical Garden, September 3rd is the last date to plant anything in the St. Louis region and have it develop adequate roots over the following six weeks so that they can overwinter successfully. According to them, historically our first hard frost is October 15th, and plants need to be established by then to overwinter and survive. This was a surprise to me. Craig and I have successfully moved plants into October and had them overwinter and do fine, especially hostas and daylilies. However, it would be better to do this sooner rather than later!

This is also the time to mulch after the first frost. Mulching before then holds heat in the ground and doesn't allow the plant to go dormant as it should. You also get more heave when mulching before a hard frost. So all these years I've never mulched after the hard frost. It never occurred to me to do so until this lecture by a Master Gardener on winterizing your Garden.

Our last meeting with Rob Mortko (from Made in The Shade Gardens) was very entertaining and enlightening. His program was on Hosta Trends in the Future. I hope many got to see it. (President's message continued on page 2)

2017 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 15	Meeting with Panel Discussion 1:00 PM, Creve Coeur Government Center
November 12	Board Meeting 2:00 PM, home of Diana Plahn 1911 Westview Avenue, Kirkwood, MO 63122
December 3	Holiday Party Home of Martha and Paul LaFata 433 Edgar. Webster Groves, MO 63119
June 20-23, 2018	American Hosta Society National Convention Philadelphia, PA
July 12-14, 2018	Midwest Region Hosta Society Convention Peoria, IL

(President's message continued from page 1)

We also got the chance to present Certificates of Appreciation to two couples that have worked hard over many years to keep the Society functioning. Those two couples were Dave & Joan Poos, and Chester & Pam Wolkowitz. I appreciate their dedication and commitment to the Hosta Society and I'm sure many other people in the society appreciate them. Our October meeting is a panel discussion with our own society members serving as experts. Many of the people in the Hosta Society are very knowledgeable about hostas and what makes them tick, so it's difficult to pick just a handful of people to ask to serve on a panel. A big thanks to those who agreed. Another big thanks to all the members who are coming to participate. Please bring your questions. We'll work on getting answers to those questions.

November is the month of the Society's annual board meeting. This year the meeting is on November 12th at my home, 1911 Westview Avenue, Kirkwood, MO, 63122. The meeting will start at 2pm. All members are invited. Please bring your favorite appetizer and drink to share. Parking is on Westview Avenue. I do have a long driveway, so you'll have to walk a bit. We have quite a bit of work to do at this meeting. The society's standing rules need to be reviewed and approved, and a budget prepared. Also a schedule will be set for next year.

That's all for now. Keep watering,

Diana



Questions, questions, questions!
This is your opportunity to get answers!

October 15 Meeting

Panel discussions with your fellow Society members offering their sage advice

We are going to have an old fashion blog. Instead of using the internet to solicit advice from gardeners living who knows where, we are going to have face-to-face interactive discussions. Just think, instant answers from people living in your own back yard who have been growing shade plants for many years and are willing to share their experiences with you.

Whether you are new to shade gardening or are an old hand, there are many topics that might be of interest to you. For instance, do most members mulch or fertilize their beds? What do they use? How much? When do they apply it? Where can it be purchased?

Members use various methods to control varmints and diseases. What about those pesky deer, rabbits, mink, raccoons, armadillos and slugs? What works; what is a total waste of time? What causes these holes, spots, streaks, and discolorations in my hosta plants? Should I worry? What can I do about it? Has anyone tried NemaKill and does it work?

How do your fellow gardeners care for their potted plants over the winter? Do they cut off the foliage now or wait until spring? Do they rake their leaves or let them be to insulate their plants from a harsh weather?

Bring your questions, get some answers. Share your experiences with your fellow gardeners.

September Elections

New Officers and Board members were elected or appointed at the September meeting. Each will serve a two-year term. To thrive a society needs good leadership. Each of the following members has volunteered to give of his/her time to ensure our society continues to offer quality activities and speakers in the coming year. Next time you see them, be sure to tell them how much you appreciate their commitment.

Your 2018-2019 Board:

President: Diana Plahn

Vice-President: Martha LaFata

Treasurer: Melissa Byrd

Secretary: Marian Murphy

Hospitality: Karen Frey and Josh Jagger

Newsletter Editor: Joan Poos



September Meeting

Rob Mortko

'The Future of Hosta'

With the closing of two large hosta nurseries and tissue culture labs in the last few years, what bodes for the future of this plant we so love? Our September speaker Rob Mortko, owner of Made in the Shade Nursery, gave us some insights.

Rob stated that to predict the future it is wise to look at the past. He began with the 'age of OS'. This was the time before tissue culture evolved and all plants were propagated from mother plants. The mother plants are referred to as originator stock or OS for short. It took years for hybridizers to grow clumps large enough to divide to obtain product to sell. This was a time of small supply and high demand which equaled high prices.

The game changed in the 'age of TC'. Hybridizer Mark Zilis, working at the University of Illinois, helped develop the process of tissue culturing (TC) plants. A large nursery, Walters Gardens, hired Mark to bring his propagation by tissue culture techniques to their large operation. This process is more labor intensive than growing and dividing OS plants. Soon TC labs began to spring up in other parts of the world that had lower cost labor. Hostas became more plentiful.

In the 1990s the 'age of virus/nematodes' began. Tissue culturing does not eliminate the virus HVX. If an infected plant is entered into the process, the resultant plants will also have HVX. This virus is spread by sap to sap transfer and is especially prevalent in low cost labor centers around the world where TC plants are grown in large fields. At the same time, chemicals used to control nematodes were removed from the retail market by the EPA. Thus more and more plants sold retail carried diseases.

About this time hostas were becoming more popular. With the abundance of TC plants, prices decreased. In 2014 hostas were the number one selling plant in terms of dollar value. 14 million hostas were sold resulting in \$58 million in sales. Then the sky fell in. When Shady Oakes Nursery closed in 2013 and Q&Z in 2014, their new hosta stock was sold at fire sale prices. Now in 2017 that glut of new introductions is about over. Fewer and fewer new introductions appear in the catalogues of the large nurseries. TC plants from the low cost labor centers are still available, but are sold in big quantities that are cost prohibitive to smaller nurseries.

So where are gardeners to find new introductions? The long time hybridizers are aging. Some new intros are coming from the Dutch in Europe. They are continuing efforts to make their plants virus and nematode free. A new trend is small hybridizers selling their plants on social media instead of sending them to TC labs. They get their money immediately.

Bottom line, we need new hybridizers to fuel the market, new growers, new vendors, new TC labs, new people who can spot interesting plants in other people's yards. Are we going back to the future? High demand for fewer new plants. We will see prices start to creep up.

But not all is gloom and doom. Rob has expanded his TC lab and is looking at ways to make the process more cost effective. He concluded his talk with pictures of new introductions currently in TC at his lab. There are many exciting plants in the pipe – they're just going to cost more.

Congratulations!

Pam and Chester Wolkowitz Joan and Dave Poos

AHS President's Wall of Honor

The American Hosta Association created the President's Wall of Honor to thank those members of local societies who have worked tirelessly for many years to ensure the smooth running of their societies. Members nominated by their local societies have their names listed on the AHS web-site's Wall of Honor.

This year the St. Louis Hosta Society nominated two couples who have spent countless hours enriching our society with their knowledge, humor, passion and boundless energy.



Pam and Chester Wolkowitz

Whatever the event, be it a meeting, a garden party, a sale or wallowing in the mud at a MOBot work day, these two couples could be sighted. They are the bedrock of a society, ever present, up for anything and everything.

Pam and Chester have been members since the early 2000s. Pam served as Secretary 2004-2007 and then as President 2010-2011. Pam and Phyllis Weidman created a DVD entitled "Hosta 101" which can be used by them or any other member to present talks to groups interested in growing our favorite plant. Pam often speaks to garden clubs spreading her love of hostas.

Dave served as Society Treasurer 2008-2011 and then as Vice President 2012-2015. Joan has been the Newsletter Editor since 2008.

Besides donating hundreds of hostas to our annual MOBot sale, both couples are there at the crack of dawn to help setup, price and sell. They donate generously to our annual auction. This past summer Chester and Pam acted as auctioneers. Not bad for a fellow in his 90s!

Both couples worked tirelessly helping to make the 2008 and 2016 AHS National Conventions a success. In addition to chairing committees, their beautiful gardens were on display during each event and have been open for members' enjoyment on numerous occasions.

They joined for the plants, but stayed for the good friends they have made along the way.



Dave and Joan Poos
(Both photos taken by Craig Plahn)

Another Perspective on the Future of Hostas

Written by Harold McDonell

After attending Rob Mortko's talk about the future of hostas, I came across the following article, titled 'Hosta Ramblings'. It was written by Harold McDonell and published in the Fall 2015 edition of 'Georgia Hosta Notes', the newsletter of the Georgia Hosta Society. After seeing pictures of plants that are currently being prepared for tissue culture by Rob, I realized that Harold's musings of 2015 are coming true. I've reprinted the article with permission of the Newsletter Editor's article Exchange.

Harold McDonell's article:

From time to time, I hear people in the hosta world grumble that perhaps we have taken hostas as far as they can go, that there are no more major advances that can be made to keep hostas at the top of shade perennial pop charts. I beg to disagree. Evolution is anything but finite for any living thing, hostas included.

A few years ago, some people in the daylily world were also saying that daylilies had reached their pinnacle of development. Since then, through the imagination of hybridizers with great eyes for spotting seemingly insignificant little differences and then diligently working to exploit those differences, we now have daylily blooms with colors never imagined a few years ago, with eyes and edges one could only dream of, with myriads of patterns that make psychedelic look calm, with new flower forms that excite even the most jaded daylily collector. AND, the hybridizers will enthusiastically tell you they have only just scratched the surface of what could be.

The same can be true for hostas. Well, how much more can you do with a leaf you say. Who knows? However, every few years something like *H.* 'Praying Hands' comes along to challenge that notion that form is finite. We already have experienced the rise of the miniatures to prominence that I doubt most of us would ever have expected 25 or 30 years ago. Unusual leaf patterns continue to be found. Elaborate ruffling of hosta leaves, like that seen on *H.* 'Neptune', has been appearing more and more in recent years. Red petioles and now pink, purple, and yellow petioles and scapes continue to be developed and refined. The color red is expanding well into the leaves now, thanks to our diligent hybridizers. How about purple tinted hosta leaves? It is no longer considered impossible.

Then there is the hosta floral presentation, perhaps the most neglected aspect of our favorite plant to date. How many hostas do you have that, while they may be beautiful plants, their scapes and/or blooms are such that you tend to remove them even before they bloom? I have a few of those, quite a few! However, not everyone has been satisfied with this status quo and there are more and more hosta hybridizers beginning to pay specific attention to advancing the quality of the floral display of hostas.

In the future, I am satisfied you will see new hostas that will make you excited about hosta flowers. Of course, better scapes that are more proportionate to the plant and not flopping all over the place will become more important as we demand it - already is. More attention will be paid to the form of the flowers. Most exciting, much more attention is already being paid to the subtle differences in flower color and pattern and some of our hosta hybridizers, just like those visionary daylily hybridizers, are working with those subtle differences to create some really exciting new looks for our flowers. (continued next page)

Expect prominently striped flowers in the future. Even the presentation of the individual flower on the scape is garnering more attention. Then there is the advancement of new colors in hosta flowers. Not much longer will we have to be satisfied with white, lavender and purple. Did you know that a yellow flowered hosta is just around the corner? It is! Also exciting is that other hybridizers have also begun to develop yellow flowered hostas so there will be more and more material for all hybridizers to work with to make even better yellow flowered cultivars.

I expect that true blue hosta flowers and true red flowers will be available sooner rather than later. It just depends on how many hybridizers choose to take up the challenge and some are already reaching some degree of success. I fully expect to see both red and blue hosta flowers in my lifetime and as you know, I am no spring chicken! How about a pretty orange flowered hosta? It could be..... sometime in the future.

Yes, there are exciting new developments coming for our beloved hostas. We have not reached the pinnacle yet, nor will we ever. Just keep dreaming and eventually our enterprising hybridizers will make those dreams come true!



H. 'Pablo Picasso'



H. 'Light of Day'



H. 'Hometown Hero'

Three hostas that Rob Mortko hopes to tissue culture. They may be on the market soon. Photos taken in Rob's garden during the 2017 MRHS Convention.

Save these dates

Mark your calendar for the annual Board Meeting scheduled for November 12 at the home of our President Diana Plahn. All members are invited to attend.

Mark your calendar for the annual Christmas Party to be held this year on December 3 at the home of newly elected Vice President Martha LaFata.

More information about each event will be printed in the November newsletter.

American Hosta Society – 50th Anniversary Convention
“Phifty in Philly” - June 20-23, 2018



The Delaware Valley Hosta Society is pleased to host the 2018 Convention, marking the 50th anniversary of both the founding of the AHS and its first convention, which took place near Philadelphia.

Philadelphia, rich in history, artistic culture, and legendary sports, has also been declared America’s Garden Capital. Topping the crown of garden gems is the fabulous Longwood Gardens, with its completely renovated Main Fountain Garden and shady Hillside

Garden. As a special treat to celebrate the 50th anniversary, we are pleased to be taking everyone to Longwood for a fantastic fountain show!

As well, the convention will be jam packed with everything you expect: outstanding private gardens featuring the best in hostas and companion plants, a Historic Hosta Show, a bevy of vendors and speakers, and the best of Philly music, food, and hospitality. See <https://www.ahs2018philly.org/> for more information.

Midwest Regional Hosta Convention
Peoria Illinois - July 12 - 14, 2018



St. Louis Hosta Society Officials

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St. Louis Hosta Society Membership Information

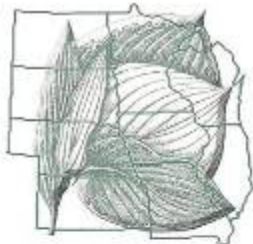
Contact: Melissa Byrd
117 Gunston Hall Drive
St. Charles, MO 63304
mabyrd68@gmail.com

Dues: \$7 per year, \$18 for three years
Family or Individual

Meetings held at **1:00 PM** at the **Creve Coeur Government Center, 300 N. New Ballas, 63141** (between Ladue Road and Olive), unless otherwise noted.

Visit our Web site: www.stlouishosta.org

Visit us on Facebook, St. Louis Hosta Society



Midwest Regional Hosta Society

The Midwest Regional Hosta Society represents Region 5 of the American Hosta Society that includes 9 states.

Membership in the society is \$20.00 for 2 years, which includes two issues per year of the newsletter.

Please mail a check made payable to **MRHS** to:

Barbara Schroeder,
Treasurer
1819 Coventry Dr.
Champaign, IL 61822

along with Name, Address, phone, and email (Most correspondence is by email). For questions email MRHS.Hosta@gmail.com.



AMERICAN HOSTA SOCIETY

Members receive three issues per year of The Hosta Journal, which includes color photographs of hostas, reports on national conventions, scientific information concerning current research pertaining to hostas, and advertisements of interest to hosta families.

Membership checks should be made out to "AHS," and mailed to:

Sandie Markland, AHS Membership Secretary
P O Box 7539
Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948

Dues for one year are \$30 for an individual and \$34 for a family. For more information, visit the AHS website: <http://www.americanhostasociety.org/>