



# Show Me Hostas Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 5

September, 2009

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



**Jeff Hall President**

*Photo by Kelly Hall*

I truly hope everyone is enjoying the weather. I cannot remember when we have had such a good summer. Although with this cool weather, we have to take the bad with the good. No breaks in mowing grass, weeds continue to grow, and it's hard to use the excuse that "it's just too hot outside for chores". I think the voles are enjoying the weather as well. We have assaulted these critters with all we can do (legally). We'll have to let you all know if we make any progress in reducing the vole population.

Throughout the years of the fund raising auctions and plant sales, you have helped to grow a healthy bank account for the

society. As you know, we made a contribution to the Missouri Botanical Garden this year and two crabapple trees have been planted in the society's name. Recently, the board met to discuss several ideas of how we may further give back to the community, the society, and promote the genus *Hosta*. We proposed a budget and we will present our ideas to you for your vote at our next meeting in September. We truly believe you will be happy to hear how we are giving back to the community as well as our members.

To those of you who have not attended at least one of the garden walks this summer, you are missing out! This summer we toured some very fine gardens, enjoyed some great food, and had a chance to mingle with fellow hosta freaks, I mean friends. Thank you to those of you who opened your gardens to us.

Lastly, membership across the country in local and national garden societies has slowly declined. We all have friends who enjoy what we do, so please encourage them to get involved. Invite them to any of our meetings or events. The more the merrier.

Now get out there, and enjoy the weather!

*Jeff Hall*

## 2009 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- September 13**                      **Meeting and guest speaker Mike Shadrack**  
1 PM, Creve Coeur Government Center
- October 17**                        **Special event – speaker Bob Solberg**  
1 PM, Creve Coeur Government Center
- October 18**                        **Field trip to weather center with Melissa Byrd**
- November/December**    **Holiday Party – date and location to be announced**

### **‘Blue Mouse Ears’ looks SMALL to me, but I’m wrong, it’s MINI!**

September 13, 1 PM, Creve Coeur Government Center

Internationally well-known speaker and humorous Mike Shadrack



*photo from google.com*

No matter how small your garden is, there’s always room for a hosta. Gaining in popularity are hostas the American Hosta Society has designated as ‘small’ and ‘mini’. Our society has invited Mike Shadrack to give us the scoop on the smallest of the small.

Mike has been growing and hybridizing hostas since the middle 1980s. His Western New York garden contains a large collection of modern cultivars and also a garden devoted to small hosta.

A member of the American Hosta Society since 1992, he is currently Vice-President Publications. His wife Kathy is Recording Secretary. He is also a former Chairman and current Bulletin Editor of the British Hosta & Hemerocallis Society. Mike is a fixture at AHS National Conventions and various regional events, sometimes lecturing and often adding wit and vigor to his stint as auctioneer in their auctions.

His love of photography has resulted in a large slide library of hosta varieties and hosta gardens, many of which appear in UK and USA magazines. He is co-author with Diana Grenfell and photographer of the book, ‘The Color Encyclopedia of Hosta’. The sequel to that book, ‘The Timber Press Pocket Guide to Hostas’, was released in 2007.

Don’t miss an afternoon of quick wit, amusing stories, hosta expertise and of course beautiful photographs.

## Joan and Rick Clarkson's colorful garden – August 15 Garden Walk



'Paradise Island' sits above a spiral iron cutout in one of the beds at the entrance to Joan and Rick's garden. The hosta is apropos as this was indeed a 'paradise island' in the midst of Alton, Illinois.



Rick prefers to garden with pots. Almost all his plantings, companion plants as well as hostas, remain in carefully tended pots. Pots lining the driveway, front walk and standing sentinel at the front door welcome visitors to their home.



Large beds featuring cannas, impatiens, two-toned petunias, colorful ground covers and an amazing collection of peppers bring a blaze of color to their yard.

Thank you Rick and Joan for the hospitality, the dogs and brats, and especially the home-made ice cream!

**What a beautiful evening!**



## This and That

Your newsletter editor was out of town during the July garden walk at Pat Payton's and Jean Hudson's beautiful, inspiring garden. I know that I missed a treat – there's always a good time to be had at their home. On behalf of all society members, thank you for opening your garden for our enjoyment.

At the September meeting, the slate of new officers will be presented by the nominating committee to the membership for their consideration. Be present to vote for those you wish to steer your society for the next two years.

At the September meeting, Phyllis Weidman will have a diagram of the existing MoBot hosta beds and their contents. With member input, her committee, along with Darmon Williams and Jon Sweeney of MoBot, will develop a long range plan to improve both the layout of the beds and the variety of the plants within the beds.

## The room was filled, the bidding fierce



### July 19 Member Plant Auction

On July 19<sup>th</sup> our society's annual plant auction created an afternoon of fun as attendees vied to place the top bid for that hosta or companion plant they just had to have.

This auction is one of two events that fund our society's yearly activities and make the publication of this local newsletter possible. Because of the fine publicity given the event and the support of the large turn-out of members and non-members, our society will continue to thrive.

The front and side wall of the Government Center were filled with plants donated by members. The society thanks every person who invested their time and labor in digging and potting items for this event. Without their generosity, there would be no auction.

As soon as the doors were open, even as the plants were still arriving and being placed in order for auction, people were examining the merchandize and making their lists.

Hostas from 'A' to 'Z' were on the block. Everything from nursery stock size to large, many-eyed hosta clumps was up for grabs. There were large clumps of readily available hosta for novices and others less often seen in nurseries or catalogues for the dyed in the wool hostaholic. The bidding was spirited with several of the offerings fetching over \$50. Every plant found a home.

## 2009 AHS National Convention Award winners

### Alex Summers Distinguished Merit Award: Mary Schwartzbauer Hosta of Merit: 'Her Eyes Were Blue'

Mary was honored for her years of service making AHS a better society and for her efforts to create sharing between AHS and local and regional societies.

In her acceptance address Mary stated that she was not a hybridizer, nurseryman, botanist or horticulturalist, but 'just a member whose greatest joy in all of this is having found the true meaning of the 'Friendship Plant'. Mary's close friends decided that they would like a hosta named for Mary's mother who died last year, a victim of dementia. Hosta 'Her Eyes Were Blue' was hybridized by Don Dean, is currently in production, and will be available in 2010.

'Her Eyes Were Blue' was selected and named for Mary's 'closest and dearest friend'. Mary stated her mother's 'eyes were blue and she saw through them her purpose, which was to be of service to others'. 'She was truly a friend to all she met. Whenever she spoke with someone, she was totally engaged. She made you feel that you were the most important person in the world, because at that moment, you were.'

Mary eloquently concluded her speech with the following words that exemplify what the Society has given to her and what it can give to each of us. 'That hosta friends saw another hosta friend in pain and joined together to lift her up, through this gift, in her time of despair is a true act of friendship. To name the gift for someone whose whole purpose and meaning in life was to be of service and a friend to others is extraordinary. That is what this Society does to people- it is not just the plant, it is the community of friends, the spirit of sharing and caring the plant has helped create.' Read Mary's every moving speech on the American Hosta Society web site: [www.hosta.org](http://www.hosta.org)

### Eunice Fisher Distinguished Hybridizer Merit Award: William and Eleanor Lachman



'Robert Frost'

photo from nhhostas.com

Bill and Eleanor's daughter, Elizabeth Lachman, in accepting the award described her parents' delight in growing flowers and hybridizing. As a teenager Bill started growing dahlias and helping his father growing and selling gladioli. Both Bill and Eleanor earned college degrees in Biological Science and Olericulture. They started by hybridizing dahlias, then iris, daylilies and finally hosta. Elizabeth stated 'They worked well together exchanging ideas, choosing the best seedlings and searching for names.' They spent their lives in Amherst, Massachusetts which is reflected in the names of some of their most widely grown cultivars, 'Brave Amherst', 'Emily Dickenson' and 'Robert Frost'.

### Benedict Garden Performance Award: 'June'



'June' was chosen from the 2008 Award of Merit winners by Garden Performance judges from all regions of the country. 'June' was deemed to represent the best-of-the-best, the ultimate hosta that performs well in gardens in all regions of the country. Visit the AHS web site to view both the 2008 and 2009 Award of Merit winners.

## COMPANION CORNER



photo karensgardentips.com

### Microtus agrestis

**Common names: common vole, meadow vole, field mouse**

At a glance, a vole resembles a house mouse, only with a short tail, small rounded ears and sparkling eyes. 5 to 6 inches long, it is colored brown to gray, with a lighter colored belly - an easy difference from mice. It has large incisor top teeth, the better to eat your hosta roots.

Isn't he cute! However, the trail of destruction he leaves behind in your hosta beds is anything but cute.

Vole presence can be detected by their runways - 1-2 inch wide, well defined, visible tunnels, at or near the surface made between their burrows. These runways are formed by the constant pattering of little feet and may be hidden by grass, ground cover or mulch. These strips meander through the lawn at the surface and usually end at a golf ball sized hole, which may also be an abandoned mole hole. Mounds of dirt around a hole are a sign of moles, not voles.

Voiles eat a wide variety of plants, loving the taste of bulbs, tubers, rhizomes, roots and the bark of young trees. They can kill young trees by girdling the trunk at or below soil level. Oh how they love hosta roots!

Wonder why you have trouble eradicating them? Listen to this. Voiles, being able to give birth at one month of age, have a tremendous reproductive rate - 1-5 litters per year, 1-11 young in each litter. That's a lot of voiles. However, because they are prey to rodent eating birds and snakes and susceptible to many parasites and diseases, the mortality rate is so high that their life span is 2-16 months. Large population fluctuations occur every 2-5 years.

What to do you ask. Voiles thrive in yards that have abundant amounts of vegetation and debris to hide under and build nests. Keep your garden weeded; avoid planting dense groundcovers and keep grass mowed. Encourage other natural vole predators, namely hawks, owls and snakes. Befriend a stray cat. Cats love hunting for rodents and they're often so proud of their conquests that they'll bring dead prey to your doorstep just to show you what good hunters they are. Discourage tunneling by digging sharp materials into your soil. Commercial products such as Permatill and Soil Perfector are ideal. Even coarse gravel may do the trick. About 10 percent gravel to 90 percent soil is enough to make uncomfortable tunneling. Hosta roots and bulbs can be completely surrounded by wire mesh garden fencing (hardware cloth). Pots can be likewise lined and small trees wrapped.

You can trap voiles using a small live-trap, such as those from the Havahart Company; but then what to do with the live vole. Peanut butter or small apple slices are a good bait. Place traps along active runs and disguise them with leaves and grasses. When the vole trips the plate, the doors close. Then you can relocate the vole - at least a half mile away in a place that won't cause damage for someone else.

Predator urines, such as fox and coyote, can be used as a repellent. Predator odors are most displeasing to voiles. Other repellents like Ro-Pel, Plantskydd, Liquid Fence, hot-pepper sauce and the fungicide thiram are effective at keeping voiles from eating live plants and bulbs. The main downside is that these need to be reapplied periodically and after heavy rains.

If you have extermination in mind, there's always poison. The two best-known brand names d-Con and Rodex, are Warfarin-based. Warfarin is a blood anticoagulant, causing internal bleeding and hemorrhaging leading to death. Poison baits are, of course, potentially hazardous to other wildlife, children and pets. If you place the poison bait directly into burrow openings or in bait containers, the hazard is reduced.

There are many other ways of dealing with this unwanted creature. Our esteemed president, Jeff Hall, has his tried and true method. He watches for the mulch or ground to move, then skewers the critter with a screwdriver.

## St. Louis Hosta Society Officials

**Jeff Hall** - President  
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## Membership Information

### The American Hosta Society

Contact: Sandie Markland  
8702 Pinnacle Rock Ct.  
Lorton, VA 22079-3029  
[AHSMembershipSecretary@earthlink.net](mailto:AHSMembershipSecretary@earthlink.net)  
Dues: Individual \$30 per year, Family \$34 per year

### Midwest Regional Hosta Society

Contact: Pete Postlewaite  
21172 Andover Road  
Kildeer, IL 60047  
[mrhs.treasurer@midwesthostasociety.org](mailto:mrhs.treasurer@midwesthostasociety.org)  
Dues: Individual \$20 for two years

### St. Louis Hosta Society

Contact: Dave Poos  
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Crestwood, MO 63126  
[dpoos@juno.com](mailto:dpoos@juno.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](http://www.stlouishosta.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>