



Show Me Hostas Newsletter

Volume 12, Issue 7

September, 2011

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Pam Wolkowitz President
Photo by Kelly Hall

Hello Fellow Hosta Lovers,

It is so hard to believe it is September already. Where did the year go?

Remember to keep watering your hostas. If you have any planting to do, it's best to get them in pretty soon so that they can get adjusted before the first frost. It will help to keep them from 'heaving' in the winter.

I had an out of town friend of my mother's stop by to see the gardens. She told me her daughter has hostas but will not share them with anyone. I told her to tell her daughter that the hosta is the 'friendship plant' and meant to be shared. I sent a hosta with her to give to her daughter hoping it will change her mind about sharing.

Don't miss Don Dean speaking at our next meeting. See you there.

Your President,

Pam

"A person's character and their garden both reflect the amount of weeding that was done during the growing season."

Author Unknown

2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 18

Meeting with Speaker Don Dean

1:00 PM, Creve Coeur Government Center

October 16

(Note location change)

Meeting with Speaker Mike Curran

1:00 PM, Summer Winds Garden Center

December 4

Holiday Party

1:00 PM, Creve Coeur Government Center



Photo taken from
www.plantsgalore.com

September 18

Don Dean

'Alex J. Summers Distinguished Merit Award' winner

This honor is given to a member of the American Hosta Society in recognition of having given 'outstanding service to the Society or to the development of the genus Hosta or both'. Don's work on behalf of the hosta exemplifies all aspects of this award.

In 1987 Don moved from a sunny lot to one heavily shaded. Like us, he joined a local gardening club looking for solutions to his shade problem. Three years later, it was but a small step to volunteer as a bus captain for the 1990 AHS convention in Minnesota. From that point on Don was hooked. He began buying hostas, met others keenly interested in this plant, joined the AHS and the Midwest Regional Hosta Society and then in 1991 founded the Minnesota Hosta Society. In 1997 he became auction chairman for the AHS and in 2002 established (and continues to run) the AHS online auction. Now retired from teaching, Don can be found speaking or just hanging out at most national and regional hosta events.

On the flip side of the coin, Don wasn't just satisfied with learning about and growing hostas. In 1991, he began experimenting with growing seeds under lights. Through the years he established relationships with Ken Anderson, Herb Benedict, Hideko Gowan and others who were willing to share with him their passion for hybridizing. Don's creations are easily grown and distinctive. Three readily available in nurseries or through catalogues are H. 'Silver Bay', H. 'Faith' and H. 'Pewterware'. Perhaps you have them in your garden.

On September 18 Don will share with us his love of this beautiful plant. Don't miss it!



Just behind the patio sits a large bubbling urn surrounded by a circle of smooth black stones. The water feature seems to rest in a sea of green lirope. The urn is backed by one of Martha's many Japanese maples. Large rocks and hostas complete the venue. *Photo by Kelly Hall.*



A path leads through a portion of one of the borders in Martha's yard. A large rock draws the eye to the many beautifully grown hostas, ferns and heucheras. Large trees give shade to her back yard and privacy from a busy street. *Photo by Kelly Hall*

July Garden Walk with Martha Lafata

Thank you Martha for sharing the fruits of your labor!

A beautiful garden, a beautiful, relaxing evening with gardening friends!



In the upper portion of Martha's side yard members admire her raised beds containing a variety of vegetables and herbs. Behind the vegetable beds is a sunny border, home to daylilies, coneflowers and other sun lovers. A small sitting area completes this quiet retreat.



What's a good party without a cooling beverage! Members supplied their drink of choice, a bit of food to share and lots of friendly talk and laughter.



The food tables were groaning with tidbits to satisfy everyone's palate. There were sandwiches to appease the big hunger and cookies to quiet that sweet tooth and everything in between. Many members visited Martha's inside studio to admire her photographs.



Mary Sparks and Mike Schmitt check names and mark selections on which they might bid.

July 17

Member Auction



Mary Sparks and Spence Sorenson look over the vast number of plants poised for auction.

On July 17th our society's annual plant auction created an afternoon of fun as attendees waved their paddles trying to place the top bid for the hosta or companion plant they've wanted all year. This auction is one of two events that fund our society's yearly activities such as speakers, the holiday banquet and the publication of this local newsletter. Because of the generosity of members who invested their time and labor in digging, potting and donating items for this sale and the support of the large turn-out of members who came checkbook in hand, our society will continue to thrive.

The front and side walls of the Government Center were filled with plants. Hostas from 'A' to 'Z' were up for auction, everything from nursery stock size to large, many-eyed hosta clumps. There were old standards for novices and others less often seen in nurseries or catalogues for the dyed in the wool hostaholic. Every plant found a home.

Special thanks go to Jeff Hall who for the past several years has acted as auctioneer. This year he shared auctioning duties with Rick Clarkson. Jeff's plant knowledge and easy humor always makes an enjoyable afternoon fly by. Thanks also to members who helped set up, cleanup, look up plant information and deliver plants to bidders. Successful events are a group effort.

It's 100 degrees now but just wait!

A message from Karen Frimel and Martha Lafata Christmas party co-chairs

The St Louis Hosta Society will hold its annual Holiday Party on Dec 4th at 1:00 PM at the Creve Coeur Government Center. The event will be catered by Tim from the Gas House Grill. The cost will be \$10 a person with a cash bar. Sign ups begin in Oct. We will once again be playing the gift exchange game. Anyone wishing to be in on the fun should bring a \$10 garden themed, wrapped gift to the event. Check out those end-of-season sales now to see what you can find.

Roll out the welcome mat for our newest members

We hope that you will all join us in September at Don Dean's presentation. Come meet more of your fellow society members and find out how friendly we are.



David Barylski	St. Charles	Frances Pike	St. Charles
Jane Bastien	Chesterfield	Tobias Raiser	Greenville, IL
Theresa Canaria	Glendale	Bob Schneiderjohn	St. Louis
Jeanne Ellis	St. Charles	Sue Schroder	Webster Groves
Steve & Sue Garnett	St. Charles	Anne Spillenkothen	Chesterfield
Cathy Herman	Webster Groves	Brenda Stehle	St. Charles
Kent & Jeannine Kalkwarf	Clayton	Nancy Wallace	Troy, IL
Leslie Limberg	St. Charles	Rachael Williams	Granite City, IL
Dave Maltagliati	Sunset Hills	Julie Wise	St. Louis
Marlene McBride	Ballwin	Jim & Jeanne Yochim	Fenton
Mary Medina	St. Charles	Stephanie Young	Webster Groves
Steve Medley	St. Louis	Rita Zeitz	Kirkwood

Have you ever misplaced your 'Hostapedia' but still wanted to know the leaf or plant size or flower color of your newly favorite hosta?

The American Hosta Society is here to help you. As a service provided by the AHS, Kevin Walek and Bobby Baxter have developed a searchable, online database of the official registry records for the genus hosta. The web site's link is <http://www.hostaregistrar.org/>.

Currently, by selecting the 'Search' tab, you can use Cultivar name or Hybridizer as a search parameter. In addition, clicking on the 'click here for Advanced Search' title allows you to generalize your search by using leaf characteristics such as, texture, form, color and/or a plant's parentage.

The 'Show Classification' tab links to a section containing show judging information. The judges handbook, lists of show judges, clinic schedules and other leaf show documents can be downloaded as PDF files.

The 'Registration' tab gives information about registering your new hosta. Not yet available, but coming, is the ability to complete hosta registrations online. Do you know what a fascinated scape is? Check the directory of hosta terminology under this same tab.

So some rainy day (will we ever see one again) when you have time on your hands and need a 'hosta fix', check out this AHS web site.

Now is a perfect time to divide hostas

Whether you want to keep your hostas healthy and thriving, whether they're encroaching on their neighbors or whether you want to make more plants to share with friends, now is a great time to divide those clumps. Bob Solberg prefers fall dividing – at least 30 days before the first frost date for your area.

Bob states that hostas grow well on 85-90 degree days with high humidity. The only danger is excessive heat or extended drought. It's imperative to keep newly divided plants wet, especially for the first two weeks. Bob writes that he "would rather have my hosta garden look "divided" as it goes into fall when hostas are usually past their peak anyway than to see it that way all season long. Hostas divided in August will come up next spring in their new homes with more divisions, better proportioned leaves and established root systems. They will look better too. So save your heavy hosta dividing for those humid late summer days. It will be tougher on you, but your hostas will thank you in the spring."

- Start by getting the right tools for the job. Many gardeners prefer a garden fork rather than a spade or shovel.
- Dig around the hosta 6 to 18 inches from the base. Once you have cut all around the clump, gently lift the plant out of the ground. If the clump is too large to lift out of the ground, use a spade to cut or two garden forks inserted back to back to pull the clump apart. Then lift out the individual divisions.
- Washing some dirt off the clump helps to see the individual plants and their rhizomes. If possible, separate the individual plants by gently forcing your thumbs between the stems and easing the stems apart. Use a back and forth pulling motion until the rhizomes break apart.



Photo from www.bhg.com

- For some varieties or if the clump is very large, it may be easier to use a serrated kitchen knife to cut through the clump. Cut the clump in various sizes. Start by spreading the roots so that you can determine where you want to cut. Try to keep as many roots and stems as possible by making cuts through the crown but not into the roots. Start by cutting the crown in half. If you are really careful you can navigate around the stems. If the clump is really large sometimes it is just easier to cut in half, without much concern about losing a few stems.
- Make the cut about half way through the crown and then see if you can pull it apart by hand. Hold each half in one hand and gently rotate the halves in opposite directions, then rotate back and forth each time applying a bit more pressure and simultaneously exerting pressure to move the halves away from each other. If you can't pull it apart then make the cut deeper.
- Remove some older, larger leaves or cut the foliage back at the time of dividing to reduce water loss and help minimize shock.
- Plant the divided plants spreading the roots out in a fan. Plant the divisions at their original level so the white basal portions of the stems are just under the ground and you cannot see them. Replace the soil, pressing firmly with the heel of your hand around the plant, and water the plants well so no large air pockets exist in the soil. Do not let the roots dry out too much. If you cannot plant them right away, place some moist dirt or peat moss on the roots and store them away from sun light. If the plants' roots dry some before you get a chance to replant, soak the plant in a bucket of water for two hours.
- Water, water, water! Newly planted hostas need an inch of water a week.

Information taken from www.hostahosta.com, www.bloomindesigns.com and www.bhg.com

Over-wintering Containers

By Kelly Hall

We have many containers placed throughout our garden in the growing season. Very few are planted with annuals. Most are planted with hostas, conifers, Japanese maples, and combinations of these plants. The problem with containers in our climate is that they must be “put to bed” each winter in an effort to save the containers and keep the plants alive from one year to the next. Our biggest enemy is heaving from the alternating cold and warm temperatures that we experience in our area. When the soil in containers has some moisture in it and then freezes and thaws, it causes expansion which can crack the container. We have cracked many a pot. Most of them were ceramic type pots that had a thin color glaze on. The glaze absolutely disintegrates over the winter. You’ll find this out when you go to move the container in early spring and end up with what look like confetti all over the ground.



We don't buy that type of pot anymore. We have, however, had excellent results over-wintering containers made of the following materials: decorative foam, plastic, heavy clay, high quality pottery, wood, hypertufa troughs (homemade by us), and even antique crocks. We have been asked this question dozens of times: “How do you over winter your pots?” Based on our years of experience, this is what we do each fall. So far, these methods have worked for us. We have some very large decorative foam pots and plastic pots containing large hostas. We wait until frost has zapped the hostas in the fall. We cut off the foliage and store the pots in our unheated shed. (At our previous home, we stored them in our unheated, but insulated, garage.) The results are the same. We do not water them AT ALL while they're in storage. We stack (yes, *stack*) the pots on top of each other (our shed is very small) (see image, upper right). We bring them out in the spring usually in late March or early April. Sometimes the hostas are already popping up. Sometimes they are popping up underneath the pot on top of them. Sometimes they are pale, albino hosta pips for a while until they're allowed to see the light of day again. They all recover nicely with watering and spring air. We have been using this method with the same hostas in pots for 10 years. We have two antique crocks in our front yard that contain hostas. At our previous house, we used a dolly to bring them into our garage for the winter (after cutting off the post-frost foliage). Now, because our yard is steeper and we're getting lazier, we have a different method. We cut off the foliage, cover the tops of the crocks with several layers of burlap, and tie some twine around the circumference of the pot to hold it securely. We then tip the crocks over on their sides (burlap side pointing uphill) and leave them for the winter. This has worked for us for 3 winters now. As for my many container-grown Japanese maples and troughs, we huddle them together against the retaining wall by our back patio. We figure this is a reasonably protected area because it's up against a wall where it should be warmed somewhat from the earth and protected from wind. Cold, dry winter wind is very hard on Japanese maples and conifers. At our previous home, we huddled containers against a privacy fence (any place that blocks the harshest winds is good). They still need to receive rain and snowfall for moisture so they shouldn't be stored under a deck or in a garage or shed. Once the containers are carefully huddled together (avoiding snapping off any delicate maple branches or smashing weeping conifers), I wad up leaves (of which we have plenty) and stuff them (densely) between the pots. The

idea is to provide insulation for the pots so that the roots are not allowed to freeze hard. This year I used frost cloth folded lengthwise and held in place by nursery pots (containing bricks for extra weight) to push against the insulating leaves (see image below).



There are some leaves on top of the containers too. We hesitate to **cover** trees with frost cloth because if it snows, the weight will push the cloth down and possibly break off branches. In general, we find it easier to put everything in one area for over-wintering. But there are always a couple of big, HEAVY pots that we don't want to move (again, the steepness and the laziness comes into play). This year we're trying a new method to keep these pots and roots from freezing. I think this is going to work really well. Our idea was to spread out an old tarp and put a pile of leaves down the middle lengthwise, roll up the tarp like a log and wrap it around the pots and secure it in place. Super easy! We'll let you know how it works (see image above right). Be sure to use "pot feet" under containers when over-wintering. The containers need to be well-drained and if the pots are not raised up a little with some sort of pot feet or bricks, they may freeze to the ground and not drain properly. If the water doesn't drain, the roots will sit in water and will rot for sure, killing the plant. Our huddled arrangement (in the images above and right) contains hypertufa troughs, as well as wood, plastic, clay, and decorative foam pots. Lastly, my Rex Begonias get to come inside the basement and live by the windows for the winter. No way around it.

Although I am not a fan of house plants in our house, I have quite a few Rex Begonias and I'm too cheap to buy new ones each year. They are watered sparingly and look pretty scrawny by spring but they always bounce back once outside again in the warm weather. Like every gardener, we have used the trial and error method of learning but these have been the most successful methods in our experience. If you have any ideas to share, let me know. I hope these ideas help in your garden.



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AHSMembershipSecretary@earthlink.net
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Midwest Regional Hosta Society

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Dues: Individual \$20 for two years

St. Louis Hosta Society

Contact: Dave Poos
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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

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>

Hosta Registry – <http://www.hostaregistrar.org/>