By Bob Solberg

This is the 35th year that I have been selling hostas. Over half my life, so for me it seems like a very long time, maybe forever. Some say it is who I am. I think it is who I am. That said, it is who I am. My dad was a hosta nurseryman, so I grew up with hostas and the plants. I know that as you develop scientific advances, a combination of these things led to the discovery of new hostas. Previously, hostas were almost exclusively grown in small gardens, in pots or as ground cover. The lack of availability of large quantities of hostas limited their use in landscape design.

Tissue culture was not without its growing pains howwever. It was a new way to create new hostas. This was not so much a technical breakthrough as it was a technical breakthrough as it was a breakthrough in thought. Off types were a natural occurrence in nature. They were not sought out in the greenhouse and even in the tubes. However, they seemed to show more color than those in the nursery caught up in the uneven swings of temperature. We will check that out again this year. Anyway, if you are a hosta hybridizer, we will have some plants for you that will probably bloom a month earlier or more than if they were in your garden. They might be fun to play with. We will have some forced plants available to ship also if you can’t make the trip to Hosta College.

And while we are at it, let’s make it a contest!!! How about $100 dollar Green Hill Farm Gift Certificates for the top three photos as selected by our Green Hill Staff? Feel free to send in more than one as the season progresses but one gift certificate per winner only.

By the way, I have forced a flat of plants of ‘First Blush’® for Hosta College. The forced plants last year seemed to show more color than those in the nursery caught up in the uneven swings of temperature. We will check that out again this year. Anyway, if you are a hosta hybridizer, we will have some plants for you that will probably bloom a month earlier or more than if they were in your garden.

So please send me your photos and we can have a little fun with this, maybe a lot of fun!
We all know a good hosta when we see one. Or do we? I think the basic assumption in evaluating hostas is that if you see one really good clump of a certain cultivar, then that “look” can be repeated in gardens around the country. It may go even further. We see a good looking hosta on tour and then, because we are experienced hosta growers, expect that we can find just the right place in our garden to produce an exact copy. Some of us even blame ourselves if we are unable to do so.

I have learned over the years that one good clump, or even a couple of good clumps grown down the street from each other, does not make a great hosta. A great hosta is one that we can all grow well. That being said, I know of no hosta hybridizers that select seedlings using the “grow well” trait as their first criterion. In fact, it is often a surprising bonus that just happens to come along with a number of more eye appealing characteristics.

Next to a perfectly streaked seedling, nothing is more eye-catching than a white-centered hosta. Why do you think that ‘Unidulata’ with all its wild, floppy scapes and late summer Pointy center hostas, even with wide green margins, frequently become almost white-margined visions, some divisions will become white-centered, or that some almost white divisions are removed from and some almost green. At first, these white-centered hostas that select seedlings using the “grow well” trait as their first criterion. In fact, it is often a surprising bonus that just happens to come along with a number of more eye appealing characteristics.

I read on the Internet that they are now putting seed packets in the mail. Here are some symptoms that we have put together they can make reasonable evidence to support a theory. They can be off base too, so I always try to keep an open mind when new, especially science driven, evidence comes along. This particular story is not only illustrative, but also a little sad.

In 1983, I visited Paul Aden’s “Garden of Eden” as part of the AHS Mini Meet on Long Island. Near the entrance of the garden, perfectly staged in the center of a raised bed, was a large clump of the hosta ‘Reversed’. It formed a large, perfectly symmetric mound of heart-shaped leaves that had wide green margins and white centers. The name said it all. I think everyone saw it and of course many of us were able to duplicate the clump in their garden. But enough talk of plant folks that are unable to do so.

Hosta ‘Curly Fries’

White-centered hostas with wide green margins, either tetraploid or not, while not as flashy, do provide us with a better hope for a good growing medium-variegated hosta. Many plants can be divided and usually continue to have good vigor but the trick comes in mass producing these plants. The tissue culture process intentionally shrinks the hosta it propagates so that they will increase more slowly and fit into a test tube. White-centered hostas, even with wide green margins, frequently become almost white liners that are impossible to grow up into mature plants because of their lack of chlorophyll. The poor little plants usually just melt out and then melt away. They may return year after year but become doomed to be classified as miniature hostas that do not grow well.

Most of what I know about hostas is from stories that I have heard or events that I have witnessed. Put together they can make reasonable evidence to support a theory. They can be off base too, so I always try to keep an open mind when new, especially science driven, evidence comes along. This particular story is not only illustrative, but also a little sad.

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Putting those names on the labels in a notebook or now-a-days in your smartphone. You wouldn’t want to buy the same hosta twice, would you? You know you will without the list. When customers visit the nursery and bring the same hosta again to the check out area that they did not buy last year, I say, “I guess you really like that one.” Usually they put one back, but maybe if it speaks to you that much, you should have two.

I order every hosta catalogue you can find and bookmark the hosta sites that no longer print them. Is this just window shopping that leads to wish lists or is it the beginning of real trouble?

You find a hosta buddy. This is one of the sneaky things hostas do to us and we never think that they are involved at all. A hosta buddy is there to confirm that you are choosing the very best hostas for your garden and usually they buy some of the same ones too. A good hosta buddy will also spend more money than you do, so you feel no guilt at all for running up your credit card bill.

When you begin to have favorites. You no longer like them all equally. Don’t worry if hosta folks do not mind, they understand, they like some more than others, too. You may even give some of your least favorite hostas to your neighbor, making room for new additions to the collection but at the same time not letting them out of your sight. They have just become young adults in your eyes and it is time to move on, but not just across town. Favorites are old faithful friends, not the newest flash in the pan. At least I hope so.
Color has always been number one on my list of traits for which to select hosta seedlings. We grow hostas in shady gardens for their blue and green splashes of white and cream. They replace the riot of floral color in the sunny perennial border. Hostas are generally known for their beautiful variegation patterns but for me, solid colors better suit really large hostas. All gold ‘Sum and Substance’ is still more important to me than any of my other hostas. A really large hosta can only be great if we can all grow it. It must reach celebrity. Better yet it must become a household name. So the name itself takes on added importance. As the fame of the hosta starts to spread, ‘Sum and Substance’ is one of the best names ever. The same plant with a different name, an obscure name, might not have reached such heights.

So what makes ‘Sum and Substance’ great? Its size, its recognizability, its color, its good growth rate, its wide marketability, and its name. You might be able to name a few more things but greatness has something to do with the naming and extent of introduction and something to do with marketing, production and consumption. As with all celebrity, its name must be known. But it always helps to be first when competition is less. Also, like the celebrities that fill the tabloids, because of the fame we have grown it. We can overlook their huge flaws. ‘Sum and Substance’ has its faults too, but we easily ignore its crazy, wild flower scapes and as we cut them off as soon as the first flower opens. Hostas and people can never be perfect.

You stay in the garden even after dark. Weeding as the moon rises over the garden. The spirit starts to become entwined in the magic of that smaller group. Maybe it is blue hostas and we can change its name to something more flattering. ‘Paradigm’ is the best growing ‘Tokudama’ type variegated hosta that there is and its name is unsatisfactory. Most would add ‘Sage’ and I guess I agree but the name, the fact that it is a narrow-margined plant for a year or two when they are trying to sell it and it emerges too early are huge negatives for me. Likewise, ‘Halcyon’ may be the most dependable blue hosta on the planet but its name congers up nothing in my mind and it is really a pretty plain plant but I guess because of its huge numbers worldwide it is great. I think however, I will choose a variegated form of it instead, ‘First Frost’ based on personal prejudice. I just love that plant. You could argue that is a more appropriate name for a mini hosta. ‘Empress Wu’ is really a pretty plain plant but I guess because of its huge numbers worldwide it is great. It is without saying, that a great hosta makes an excellent gift. It is always helpful to be first when competition is less. Also, like the celebrities that fill the tabloids, because of the fame we feel for our hostas and each other that is only totally felt in person. Hosta fans are only too happy to talk hostas with anyone that is only totally felt in person. Hosta fans are only too happy to talk hostas with anyone that loves them too. We have no royalty in Hostadom, only heroes.

You stay in the garden even after dark. Weeding as the moon rises over the garden. Dinner is put on hold, much to the chagrin of our friends that share each other’s joys and sadness. Dinner is put on hold, much to the chagrin of our friends that share each other’s joys and sadness. Hosta fans are only too happy to talk hostas with anyone that loves them too. We have no royalty in Hostadom, only heroes.

Oh yes, our lives and the lives of our hostas are proceeding along the same evolutionary path. It is a better way. First they lured us with their simple beauty. Infatuating creep into our heads and hearts followed quickly by real color. Hostas then stimulate our natural intellectual curiosity with all the tricks they can do. They are the puzzle we just can’t completely solve, the theory that defies explanation.

Your commitment to them leads to a commitment to our fellow hosta growers. First you plant the ones that you find ‘spart fishing’ at Walmart or a gift from God that appears magically in a clump in your own garden. It may be a chance seeding, it may be really good. Just ask any of the many afflicted. Hostas make life better. Hostas make life fun! Need I say more?
The Green Hill Gossip

The lesson from all this is that hostas can sport in more ways than we can imagine. In the early 1980’s we all thought of “Radiant Edger” but it was “Patricia Minuteman” in the early 1990’s, and then to a lesser extent “Grand Tiara”, from which we learned that hostas can double their chromosome number and become tetraploid. It is possible that a new clone has been produced at least at the DNA level even if they appear similar to the parent. It is no one’s problem to identify. Thus, now every new sport is given a new cultivar name, no matter how similar it looks to another one, just to be on the safe side. Again, this was another thought breakthrough.

There is one more revolutionary breakthrough that is beginning to change the way we look at hostas. With more people are getting into the game, hostas are starting to grow in a whole new way.思路n the world. The feature is a new form of propagation known as tissue culture. A normally diploid, 2 sets of chromosomes, has been propagated from seed and coming true to the parent.

Hosta, the rare, elusive plant and until recently, a very small number of species. The species, ironically, is the parent of what we now call “ery catalogue in 1905 in Germany. Surely it is significant that the wild. It is a cross of what we now call “hosta” but the sports that have come from it are different. It is the pod parent of my first introduction, “Tardiflora”. He had to “break” more dormant eyes and to possibly produce a new plant.

Hostas are most all new variegated hostas before 1980 inherited maternally Frances Williams’ or Kevin Vaughan’s “H. sieboldiana” (‘Beatrice’) or “H. nakaiana” (‘Lemon Lime’), a wonderful small hosta. It has proved to be as a good breeding parent for miniature hostas. It is the pod parent of the

**Hosta ‘Soupers’**

**HOSTA BREAKTHROUGHS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

The story of hostas is one of growth and change. In the early 1980’s we all thought of ‘Radiant Edger’ but it was ‘Patricia Minuteman’ in the early 1990’s, and then to a lesser extent ‘Grand Tiara’, from which we learned that hostas can double their chromosome number and become tetraploid. It is possible that a new clone has been produced at least at the DNA level even if they appear similar to the parent. It is no one’s problem to identify. Thus, now every new sport is given a new cultivar name, no matter how similar it looks to another one, just to be on the safe side. Again, this was another thought breakthrough.

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Hosta folks do not market their plants very well. Yes, they use social media, websites, and even still use paper catalo-
gues, dinosaurs like me. Most hosta nurseries however do not have an advertising budget. I remember learning at my fa-
th's Softball School of Business that a 10% figure was reasonable for marketing and advertising. With all these free Internet opportunities, many hosta growers think that they have found a way to save that 10% in costs. In rea-
ality, advertising dollars now need to be spread over a much wider number of options.

I am trying to change.

Unfortunately, hosta are rarely featured, something I am trying to change.

Hosta Gardening magazine has "The Best New Plants for Sun and Shade". These are

you will demand from your local garden cen-
ter and mail order retailers. It is meeting

demand due to being promoted by large wholesalers to the consumer. Unfor-

tunately, hosta are rarely featured, something I am trying to change.

Growing hosta is always a work in process.

Remember, a garden is never completed; it is always a work in process.

Over time tree roots will rein-

corporate the organism is much

larger the air spaces in the soil will be and the plant will enjoy a better

work well. The coarser the organic material is

Hosta Society as an online Facebook

group and now a brick and mortar club with

members, by laws and rules. This is what

hosting a national convention is supposed to
do, increase local interest and participation.

Please thank her at Hosta College when you see her there.

First Blush’ PPAF in the

Garden Gate Magazine

Hosta ‘Ladybug’

The 2015 AHS National

Convention

First let me thank everyone of you that visited us in North Carolina last June. I am
doing apologize for the heat; although it did demonstrate some of the environmental ex-
crises that help to grow our hostas. We did have clouding thunderstorms most every

night that perk up the gardens but also added a cooling mist to the plants. It was a time of

heat exhaustion so I consider that a success. We had 418 folks attend, pretty impres-

sive. All seemed to have a great time and en-
joyed the company and the scenery. At Farmers Market, the plant shopping and even

the box lunch. Nancy’s tie-dye convention bags were a big hit, something that had caused

her many nights of worry. Even the buses were flawless except for a weak air condi-
tioner or two. In all it was a great success and no one could believe that we put it all together in

two years. I again want to thank all the folks that helped both locally and from all around the

country I will appreciate and re-

member your support forever.

In case you did not notice, we do not have a local hosta club here anymore to host a con-
vention. Nancy and I did have help from several people as I have said but before the lo-
cals that helped were true volunteers. All that

has changed now, because we hosted the con-
vention we sparked enough local interest that Jennie Siegenthaler formed the Central Car-

olina Hosta Society as an online Facebook
group and now a brick and mortar club with

members, by laws and rules. This is what

hosting a national convention is supposed to
do, increase local interest and participation.

Please thank her at Hosta College when you see her there.

Finally, in my life, there is always good and bad in everything. So whoever stole

Nancy’s pot of her perfectly streaked Hosta ‘Sparkle’ from the hotel lobby on their way out, please return it. There is no reward but also no questions asked.

‘Curly Fries’ is the AGHA 2016 Hosta of the Year.

Yea!!

Our unusual little, yellow, agave-like hosta, ‘Curly Fries’, has been selected as the American Hosta Growers Association Hosta of the Year for 2016. It was also selected as one of the top 25 hosta species in the American Hosta Society 2012 Popularity Poll as well as their 2012 Mini Poll. I had no idea how pop-

ular it would be but of course I am thrilled.

Side size, the selection of

‘Curly Fries’ to all the above is very good news for hosta breeders.

In the past, it is hosta sports that climb the popularity poll lists and are selected as Hosta of the Year. Seedlings do not spell the word well. Neither do small plants, or solid colored hosta. ‘Curly Fries’ is a small, solid yellow seedling with interesting leaves and lots of personality. It should give all of us seed growers hope that little unique and in the seedling tray we like so much, if given a good name and the publicity can rise to the highest heights of hosta popularity. So keep up the good work.

Green Hill Farm Business Update

These have been tumultuous times for the hosta business. With the closing of Q & Z

business update

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Hosta ‘Hovercraft’

The company that was supposed to root Thames out of business two weeks before we were supposed to get that shipment so I was forced into an emergency situation and was forced to find a local nursery with some bottom dollars to load those boxes.

The next three months were a learning expe-

Planting Instructions

Hostas perform best when planted with

fertilizers and other perennials in prepared beds. They can also be tucked into the landscape on a hole by hole basis if an area of at least 3 feet wide is prepared to a depth of 9-12 inches. When planted in the woods with wildflowers it is

loose, but firm enough to discourage voles and other rodents.

Finally, after a good rain to settle things a little, the bed is ready to plant.

Hole Preparation: Hostas do not grow deep into the soil, usually no deeper that one

shovel depth or so. Wide holes are better than

deep holes, since hosta roots usually extend as far or further from the center of the plant as the foliage does. Dig a hole wide enough to accommodate all the roots of the hosta to be planted without cutting or folding them. Make a small mound in the bottom of the hole to which the root ball is positioned and cover with about an inch of 3/8 inch gravel, either crushed granite or pea gravel. Take the bare root hosta and set the roots down the hill. Cover the roots and crown with another inch or so of gravel, making a hosta and gravel sand-

ich. Loosen the hole with soil that has been

amended with some slow release fertil-
erizer or manure (especially if planting in the spring) and do not pack the soil around the plant. Water thoroughly and mulch with a thin layer of pine bark, shredded oak bark or whatever is available to you. Even a light mulch will help the soil and retain moisture. Here is how we do it at Green Hill Farm.

First Area: The bed to be planted is completely

tilled with our old Troy Built tiller to its max-
imum depth of 8-9 inches. We remove all the

surface root trees that the tiller finds. If the soil is

poor and/or hard, we will frequently add 4-

5 inches of purchased topsoil, a good sandy

loam, and till it in to the existing soil. Then 3

inches (about 30% of the total bed) of organic

matter is spread over the bed and tilled in with

subsequent aeration. This is what you can do in your bed easily with your hands then the voles can too. We no longer spread gravel over the entire bed, and the 3/8

diameter of 4.5 inches, although it has

worked well for us in the past. We just add some

center. A topdressing of fertilizer will also

encourage rapid new growth.

When to plant: Hostas can be success-

fully planted any time that the ground can be

worked. The best times to plant hostas are when they are actively coming through new roots, in the spring after the first flush of leaves has hardened off and in late summer once the hottest weather is past. Here in North Carolina that is usually early May and late August. Most plants that we ship to retail customers are sent
during those optimum times. Planting at these
times allows the plants enough time to estab-
lish a good root system before the droughts of

summer in the first case and before they go
gormand for the winter in the latter.

Containerized hostas can be planted with a minimum of shock throughout the spring, summer and into fall. They should be

completely bare rooted before planting and their roots unangled. If your hostas arrive bare root they will probably appreciate being soaked in a bucket of water for several hours to rehydrate them before planting. Paching a leaf or two will also reduce desiccation shock and usually stimulate another flush of leaves. Hostas usu-

ally acclimate completely to their new homes in 1-2 weeks and should be kept moist during that period. A topdressing of fertilizer will also encourage rapid new growth.

Finally, for hostas to achieve their maxi-

mum potential, the soil must be able to readily take up the water and nutrients that they need. Good bed preparation in the beginning makes all the difference. This however is not the end of the process. Over time tree roots will rein-

vate your beds robbed of the soil's nutrients and weight and heavy rains will compact the soil making it hard for any water to penetrate deep into the bed. Alas, then the beds will need reworking.

Remember, a garden is never completed; it is always a work in process.
“New and exciting!!!”

**Finch Blush** *(Solberg 2015)* - ($40) 49 (seedling) - Large, (24” X 24”)
- Finch Blush not only has green leaves with red petioles that extend into the leaf blade but also a thin red margin around the leaf. This is a much more “Sea Ptic” than parent ‘Beet Salad’. However, the most exciting thing about ‘Finch Blush’ is that in the spring leaf between the seedling will start to ‘blush’ red and in the fall the leaf down toward the base. The leaves remain red here until temperatures surpass 92 degrees, usually into August. It will need to persist longer in Northern gardens. Our first red leafed hosta. We do plan to patent it.

**Ambrosia** *(Solberg 2015)* - (Sport of ‘Gau- zon’ X ‘M. Zilis 2004’) - Large (24” X 24”)
- Ambrosia is “the food of the gods” and this hosta is certainly good enough to eat. It is a blue hosta, but has long narrow leaves with lots of veins. It has lots of white wax and lots of character. You must have this one.

**Tidewater** *(Solberg 2015)* - (Sport of ‘Gau- zon’ X ‘M. Zilis 2004’).- Large (24” X 24”)
- This flashy hosta has a very showy yellow margin that will go from white in late July to bluish in the fall. A seedling of Doug Beilstein’s, it has a somewhat upright habit making a medium-sized clump. It always catches my eye from across the hoop. Perfect for any very blue hosta. 20$ or “Two for 30”

**Evening Blush** *(Dean 2013)* - (‘H. plantaginea’ X ‘Purple Verticulated Elf’) - Medium, (14” X 36”)
- This medium-sized hosta never blooms, but has the bright yellow Habitat™ giant leaf. The leaves stick up from the clump like spines, until the spines become seed pods and they are dark purple. A winner from Doug Beilstein. Special $25.

**World Cup** *(Dean & M. Zilis 2006)* - (‘Komodo Dragon’ X ‘Super Bowl!’) - Large, (20” X 40”)
- This hosta is destined to find its way into the Top 25 of All Time. It is also the one that got away. Selected from Doug Beilstein’s seedlings by Mark Zilis’ keen eye, this very tall and very upright bright yellow hosta is a showstopper wherever you see it. Grows well in deep shade or cool sun. 20$.

**Medium to Large Hostas:**

**Eeny** *(D. & M. Beilstein 2013)* - ( ‘Near Splash’ X ‘Gosan Sunproof’) - Medium, (14” X 36”)
- This flashy hosta has a very showy yellow margin that will go from white in late July to bluish in the fall. A seedling of Doug Beilstein’s, it has a somewhat upright habit making a medium-sized clump. It always catches my eye from across the hoop. Perfect for any very blue hosta. 20$ or “Two for 30”

**Pie a la Mode** *(Dean 2013)* - (‘H. plantaginea’ X ‘Pebble Creek’) - Medium, (14” X 36”)
- Even if this medium-sized hosta never blooms, it’s pointed blue leaves with rich purple petioles would make it a stand out in the garden. The purple flowers are much more showy in early spring. You have got to try this one.

**Final Summation** *(Solberg 2008)* - (Sport of ‘Sum and Substance’ X ‘Somerset’) - Medium, (14” X 30”)
- Every year I test a few plants for Mark and it passed with flying colors. It has the same bright red petioles and scapes as parent. A riot of color in a container. 25$.

**Step 3: Seeds**

Hosta seeds are ready for harvest in 6-8 weeks, but I like to wait until the pods are ready in open to late summer in the garden. My last seeds are harvested in November.

**Step 3: Seeds**

Try freezing pollen in film canisters or for quick results. I sow the seed in October under 24 hour lights and transplant as the third leaf appears. I then transplant as necessary through the summer and will bloom the first year.

Want to usually grow them slowly. For many crosses I must wait for a couple of years to cull any of the seedlings, so there are space concerns for these hundreds of seedlings.
plants. These I sow in January or even March under 18 hour lights and may or may not trans- plant once that first year. I overwinter them in their flats outside and bring them in to grow on and throw away the rest. Be ruthless, you will just throw them away in a couple of years any- way.

Most all your crosses will have a goal. Go back to that goal and select the seedlings that have traits or traits you wanted. Keep seedlings that have that trait intensely. Fre- quently, but not always, these plants will pass that trait on to your next generation.

Save any seedlings with any unusual traits, especially leaf shapes, regardless of your goal.

Save some seedlings for hybridizing, even if flawed, if they have traits that you want to pass on. Also, select for good pollen and good seed set in these “breeders”.

Visit other hybridizers and compare your selections to theirs. Get their opinions of your selections which can help you decide which one to use and which need to be re- moved.

Compare your seedlings with other simi- larly introduced hostas. Determine if yours are distinct and improved.

If a seedling is good enough to give away, it is good enough to named.

The name for your seedling should “look” like the plant. The name ‘Blue Mouse Ear’ has added greatly to the value of this hosta.

The name should connect with other hosta names. They are often descriptive names (are better than ‘Devil’ names, in most cases.) A bad name can kill a great plant.

Green hostas need the best names. Naming a hosta with a person’s name can be a great gift but it generally hurts the mar- keting potential of the plant. Do not name one after me.

Short names fit better on labels.

Due to the force a name you want, you are forced to use years for up to years on a seedling that it does not fit.

This very new hosta from Ed Schultz is a wonderful lime color, bold, in the sun, with large heart- shaped leaves that are nicely ruffled. Hence the name, and somewhat puckered. It is a sturdy plant that will make a strong statement in morning sun. It is an early bloomer and good breeder.

‘Mango Salsa’ (Solberg 2011) - (H. clausa nor- malis seedling X ‘Treasure Island’ Strawberry Smoothie’) - Medium, (12” X 20”) May the best of this red seed cross, this hosta is seed tolerant, has unusual way leaves and red on both sides of the peti- ole into the leaf and red scapes. It has lavender flow- ers, and is a little rodent. Great boarder plant, fertile both ways. Light years away from its ibis- ‘Smiley Face’, an equally stellar hosta.

‘Honey Pie’ (Solberg 2012) - (‘September Sun’ X Hosta plantaginea) - Large, (18” X 30”) May have been my favorite hosta this summer. Despite all the heat, boy did it grow. The honey colored leaves pucker with age and fragrant flowers follow in late summer.

‘Halleyhead’ (M. Zilis 2010) - (‘Halcyon’ X ‘Blue Betty Lou’) - Medium-Large, (16” X 30”) This is a striking light yellow-centered, green margined beauty that believe that it or not is easy to grow. It makes a simulation in the garden if given some morn- ing sun. This think is one of Dick Ward’s best.

‘Infatuation’ (Solberg 2014) - (Best 4 October X Red October) - Small, (10” X 20”) This very special hosta resembles a bird in flight. It is a very wasp yellow in form with rich cranberry colored petioles. The leaf margins gently undulate, effortlessly gliding on a warm summer breeze. It blooms in Au- gust and is also a show-off on arching scapes. This seedling of mine is a great mix of the species H. longipes, H. ikatii, and H. pygmoniaca. It demands attention and deserves a special spot in the garden or in a ceramic container. Beautiful purple scapes produce blooms that are only opened by barrel.

‘Pua Pod’ (Solberg 2013) - (Sport of ‘Sugar Snap’) - Large, (22” X 40”) This all green form from the ‘Sweet Sunshine’ line has dark green leaves that are cupped and puckered and a bright yellow cup, near white flowers in July. It is seed tolerant and is the perfect replacement for a ‘Tokudama’ in southern gardens.

‘Pear Salsa’ (Solberg 2013) - (H. clausa normalis X ‘Potomac Glory’) - Medium, (12” X 20”) This bright yellow hosta has puckered leaves that are almost translucent, it glows! It is a show-stopper on arching scapes. It has bright yellow flowers, and red peti- oles and scapes. Do not cut the flowers off this one. A sibling of my ‘Smiley Face’ and ‘Mango Salsa’, this one is a dappled shade plant that will brighten up any garden path.

‘Petitcut Junction’ (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - (H. nugerasi X ‘op seedling’) X Elvis Lives X ‘sabine’ seedling) - Medium, (10” X 36”) Doug Beilstein is rapidly producing a fine group of highly ruffled blue hostas. Very wasp, broad leafed, medium to large plants force a function with their leaves. It has a lovely appearance, with its light ruffles and twirled leaf tips. I love this look. 

Two or $20 for $30

‘Pitch Plantaginea’ ‘Double Up’ (Solberg 2013) - (Tetraploid sport of ‘Hosta plantaginea’) - Medium, (20” X 30”) smaller and more compact than the species. Found in tissue culture stock at Green Hill Farm and used to force plants in the greenhouse. Ben Zentzmeyer very often tells us that the species is very glossy and rubbery leaves, makes a more compact clump than the original. It makes a great pot plant for the deck or patio.

‘Plum Nutty’ (Solberg 2011) - (‘Cindy Dush’ X ‘Lympophyllum x Harvest Dandy’) X Raspberry Sorbet’) - Medium, (16” X 30”) I may be crazy for introducing this hosta with its shiny, (no wax), long-pointed leaves that are highly ruffled, but I really like the look. It has some purple on the petioles but is reluctant to set seed, but does, for me) since it flowers on nicely cupped and red scapes in July here. You may have better luck.

‘Potomac Glory’ (R. Whitmore 2007) (‘Blue Pavo’ X H. pycnophylla) - Large, (20” X 40”) This yellow centered-form of the classic ‘Potomac Pake’ make a large, sturdy, spread- ing clump. The leaves have a metallic glint to them when grown in morning sun that demands attention. It has the lavender ‘spider’ shaped flowers in June. It is a very distinctive and attractive addition to the hosta bed.

‘Potomac Pride’ (T. Avery 1995). (‘h. yingeri X ‘Blue Umbrellas’) - Large, (28” X 40”) While I was creating yellow hostas from M. yingxiang, Tony Avery was using it to create blue ones. This hosta makes a very attractive large mound of shiny metallic blue green leaves. It is easy to grow and sun tolerant in Northern gardens. Still a great unique hosta.

Hosta rectifolia SILVER STAR® (K. Moraya) (Collected in Japan) - Medium, (18” X 24”) Imagine finding this hosta in the wild! It is the best form of H. rectifolia, one of our most popular hostas. It has two colors of leaves at the same time. It makes a great clump for the centerpiece in a mixed container of perennials, annuals or mini hostas. It has tall, straight scapes with purple flowers in late July. $15

‘Rough Knight’ (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - (‘King of the Hill’ X open pollinated) - Medium, (10” X 36”) - Doug Beilstein has a special place in his hosta heart for cupped hostas, so do I. This small hosta has been cupped with perfect little rows of puckers. All the leaves appear to be emerging from a single point like a bouquet of white tulips in early spring or summer. Not for you under several types of contractual arrangements. I will try talking to quite a few nurseries or large greenhouses. If you do not want to sell the plant yourself, all types of contracts can be arranged with several different nurseries. I will be happy to talk in unbiased way to discuss all the options with you, if you have a new hosta you would like to introduce widely.

‘Saison Cool’ (Solberg 2009) - (Sport of ‘Night be- fore Christmas’) - Medium, (10” X 24”) It’s back, just in time to cool you down this summer. With thicker, darker leaves than its parent and a brighter white cen- ter ‘Soni Cool’ makes a dense flat clump. The white centers will “green up” in the hottest July weather, protecting the leaves from melting. A white-centered hosta that is easy to grow, my favorite kind.

What is the best market for your new hosta? How many people who see it, want it? Is it a Top 25 hosta or just a nice plant that is special? Think about both types of seedlings that I select and save.

Who should sell it? No one, you should, or should someone else? Again, there are sev- eral nurseries that can sell your new seedling for you under several types of contractual arrangements.

Having a backyard hosta business can be fun and profitable, especially if you sell your own seedlings. Just ask Mary Chastain.

Giving your named seedlings to garden visitos you may suit better and is very re- warding also.

Focus on the part of hybridizing that “turns you on”. Maybe it is pollination, maybe growing seedlings. It could be pasting along your babies on to other hosta folks, but for many, I think it is coming up with those inter- estingly appropriate names, for me, it is seeing my seedlings in other folk’s gardens, growing bigger and better than I could ever grow them.

Remember, it is not supposed to be work, hosta hybridizing is supposed to be fun! -- If a seedling is good enough to name, it is good enough propagated.

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Finally, Bob the Historian

I have always had an interest in history. I was at that impressionable age when our country celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Civil War, “The War of Northern Aggression.” Even as a young child, it was clear to me how differently the war was portrayed over the past five years as we celebrated its 150th anniversary than it was in the 1960’s. Anyway, I would love to write history as you can see from my cover article this year but all that research might destroy my eyes.

The Green Hill Gossip is a proud member of the AHS from Journal Editor to Vice President for the Genus Hosta, to AHGA Liaison and so on. I am happy to announce in this column our massive circulation in the thousands, that this winter I have been appointed to the position of my dreams. In February, I met with George Schmid, the previous keeper of the archives and returned home with six boxes of old The Hosta Journal newsletters, and all kinds of tidbits. My goal is to find a permanent public location to house all of these materials and the great influx of new members in the past five years that will contribute to this. All hosta clubs and societies that will become available in the near future. Any suggestions you have for such a location for our archives would be most welcome.

In the future I will also be asking for photos of hosta folks as well as the best hosta materials to complete our records. I also hope to write a historical article for The Hosta Journal at least once a year. But for now, I think I will keep me busy for a while. Think of me when you are cleaning out that old photo collection, you never know what you might find.

Spring 2016 Complete Retail Hosta Listings, continued from page 9
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Dixie Regional June 2-4 in Huntsville, AL
For more information visit: www.DixieHosta.net

American Hosta Society Convention July 15-18 in St. Louis, MO
For more information visit: www.StLouisHosta.org

American Hemerocallis Society Convention June 29 - July 2 in Louisville, KY
For more information visit: www.Daylilies.org

Midwest Regional July 7-9 in Champaign, IL
For more information visit: www.MidwestHostaSociety.org

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We love to have visitors. If you are coming from a distance, please call for an appointment to make sure that we are not on a field trip or “Company Lunch”. We will be open Fridays and Saturdays the weekends of April 15-16, April 22-23, April 29-30, May 6-7, May 13-14 from 9:00 to 5:00. We will also have our annual Memorial Day Festival, May 30th. Please note that we will be open on Monday only of that weekend this year. Please check our website for sale dates and directions to the new nursery in Franklinton. We will have a wide selection of our hostas available at very reasonable prices as well as ferns, conifers and maybe a few other surprises. Hope to see you soon.

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Ordering Instructions
All hostas are container grown and shipped bare root. Hostas can be shipped year round but usually travel best from May-June and August- September. Shipping is by UPS and the cost is $15.00 per order except for all orders to the Rocky Mountain States and the West Coast that will be shipped by USPS Priority Mail at a cost of $25.00 per order.

Please include payment with order. Make checks payable to Green Hill Farm, Inc. And we now take VISA and Master Card so you can call in your order. Order early as some hostas may be in limited quantities. We will not substitute but will send a refund unless you request otherwise.

All our hostas are satisfaction guaranteed. If for any reason you are not satisfied with your hostas, call us at the nursery immediately and return the plants within 5 days and we will gladly replace the hostas or refund your payment.
Growing Minis

from the 2010 November Gossip Jr.

Hostas are generally described as carafée, easy to grow plants. Even the fragrant-flowered hostas, like 'Tokudama' in the North and 'Tokudama' in the South are usually manageable if given the right spot in the garden. However, now that the miniature hosta craze is sweeping Hostadom, gardeners everywhere are finding that minis are not only the easiest hostas to grow.

There are really two types of miniature hostas, those that are small because they do not grow very well and those that are small because they do not grow very well. Many white-centered minis and some yellow ones fall into this latter category. If you have trouble keeping these little guys alive it is probably not your fault, they are just not vigorous plants.

All minis, by virtue of their small size alone, do however have some advantages over their larger hostas cousins. They have shorter, and often much smaller in diameter roots than large hostas. Therefore, they cannot send their roots deep into the soil where the moisture hides in the dry season. Thus they need to be watered more frequently, but they also need better drainage, so that the water can get to those little roots easily. Many gardeners add very small gravel to their beds and even use it as a mulch. (You may want to try turkey grit made here in Mt. Airy, NC.) It is like having a screen bed, but with much more fine particle organic matter, moist but well drained.

Short roots, coupled with small dormant buds, also present a problem in winter. Newly planted minis may heave out of the ground and have their exposed buds become permanently damaged. Older minis may grow out of the ground, or have the ground compact around them leading to the same disastrous result. I like to use compost, pine bark fines, or small gravel mulch to help with this, (it also keeps the leaves for getting upholstered with out of the rain).

If you water your miniature hostas more often, then you must fertilize them more, also. Many sophisticated mini growers do not fertilize their minis at all, starving them into the smallest possible size. Then they wonder why they lose one every now and then. Little hostas need fertilizer too, especially a little bit of liquid fertilizer every few weeks during the growing season. I like using Miracle-Gro Telescopic Food because of its added magnesium. In your good, well-drained soil, it should percolate down into the root zone quickly and safely.

Minis would also like a little more light than you probably want to give them. Babying them in deep shade, may be loving them to death. Plus, if you are watering and fertilizing more, they will need more light to photosynthesize more, and grow better. Just do not cook them, remember minis will dehydrate faster than large hostas because of their shallower root systems.

All this extra and extra that is leading me to say that minis grown well need their own special place in the garden. Maybe you need a special bed of specially prepared soil with small rocks scattered about to moderate temperatures and retain moisture, (a rock garden?) You need somewhere safe from surface tree roots that can easily strangle the rootball of all their water and nutrients. The best way to attract new members and keep the ones you already have is to have a hosta plant sale. While as much as we like to say we are a “people” society, remember we are a hosta society first.

If sales are good are auctions better? This depends on the make up of your membership. If you have several members that are active bidders, then auctions can be fun for the attendees as well as good for the club treasury. If you only have bargain hunters, then it may not be so good. These auctions are small and lower than large auctions and worse than high bidders. Why not try a raffle instead? A raffle keeps everyone involved for the price of a raffle ticket and all you need is one ticket to be a winner. Nancy once bought over eighty tickets trying to secure a hosta photograph at the Midwest Regional, by far a majority of the tickets sold, and still lost. Raffles have a place for the high bidders and the bargain hunters and can be a good alternative or addition to an auction.

Nancy’s minis on the bridge.

The ground and giving them a light mulching. If they are in nursery pots you can sink them “pot in pot” and just pop them out again in the spring. You can also put them on their side in a protected place and cover them with pine branches, pine straw, or white plastic and hope for snow to insulate them. They are better off dry in the winter than wet. (Just make sure those pots are upright before your hostas emerge, or they will be “goose neck” plants all next season!)

Finally, choose miniature hostas that grow. The smallest and prettiest are not always the most vigorous. Ironically, “Pandora’s Box”, for years the most popular of minis, is a difficult plant to grow. I have many hostas. I have used it but it needs a little extra care and maybe a special spot. I prefer slightly larger minis that grow vigorously like my ‘Crumb Cake ‘ Tongue Twister’, ‘Coconut Custard’ and ‘Cracker Crumbs’. They will stay with you in the garden or in a container. Also, some of our new minis like ‘Ladybug’, ‘Lemontini’, ‘Lemon Love Note’ and ‘Lime Zest’ are very deep green, dependable plants.

Furthermore, minis that are fast growers can be divided almost annually to keep them small. Most just pull apart, so it is a perfect practice for a good gardening friend. Keep a few extra pots handy, they make great parting gifts for garden visitors. Good luck, miniature hostas are just pure fun!