

# The Green Hill Gossip

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OUR 37TH YEAR GHF: "Great Hosta Fun!"  
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\$5.00 | 919-309-0649  
email: HostaBob@gmail.com

## Hostas are supposed to be fun!

“**H**ostas are supposed to be fun.” I have preached that for over 35 years now. I have also lived that simple philosophy and always said that when they stop being fun I will do something else. These six words have basically become my motto, my mantra. Maybe I should trademark them. **Hostas are supposed to be fun!**™ There I did it.

Hosta people are fun, too, mostly. Yes, hostas are the friendship plant and we come for the plants but return again and again for the people. Some of my best friends in the world literally, since hostas have made me friends all over the world, are hosta folks. I am sure this is true for you also but sometimes I think we pay too much attention to the people and not enough to the plants that got us here. I measure hosta conventions not by the friendships I rekindle but by the exciting hostas I see.

So without being negative in anyway, because that's not much fun, let's think about what make hostas so much fun. In the past I have opined on the emotional ties we have with hostas, how they calm and comfort us in the cool summer shade of a hosta garden. How we live our lives year to year in synchronization with theirs, spring, summer, fall, and winter. How they bring order to the garden and our lives and simplify and slow this crazy Internet driven world we live in.

Hostas demand very little from us and will sustain themselves for years with complete neglect. They are not like the creatures we bring inside our homes to live with us that must be fed, bathed, and cleaned up after daily. Yet we feel equally strong emotions toward hostas and I like to think those feelings are reciprocated. All this makes us feel very good but it is not really fun.

What then is fun? Look out this might be the aside that always seems to sneak into one of my hosta articles. Most authors would now give you the definition, from Webster's New World Collegiate Dictionary or some similar source, but that is not fun. We all know what fun is when we are having it, it is giddy excitement that will result often in lifetime memories. It is the best of what life has to offer. And yes, work can be fun too; those two words are not mutually exclusive. Hostas are what I do to pay the bills and it is lots of fun. Fun is more than the opposite of boring, well it's fun.

Fun is more than mere amusement. It makes you laugh out loud not just grin or snicker. It is entertainment that captures all our senses in a joyful way. I am sure you can name three things that you consider to be fun when you fantasize about enjoying them. Be it food, going to a ball game or playing with your grandchildren, life is full of things that are fun, if you just let them be.

Things that are fun are not always fun every minute of every day, however. It is probably a good thing since such a life of heightened excitement would not only distract us from daily mundane tasks that must be completed like washing the dishes but also exhaust us by early afternoon. (But naps are fun!) Hostas are not pure 100% fun, watering in the heat of August can be something we would rather not do, and deer are something we would rather not do at all, but hostas are still fun, even



The absolute most fun about hostas ...

then.

Why are we attracted to hostas, what makes it fun? I think one reason is that they are exotic but familiar. Hostas are plants that remind me of the tropics of my childhood. The first ones we all notice have large or even huge leaves, like elephant ears, the plant not the beast. Like them hostas are monocots and their veins run parallel down to the apex of the leaf. This open pattern reminds me of the art of the Far East the actual homeland of hostas. We have no native plants that mimic the look of hostas, so they always stand out in the garden but they also harmonize with everything and everyone around them. They fit right in. That's pretty neat.

Once you own a hosta of your own then they are no longer just fun to see, they become fun to watch. When I write almost anything I try to save the best for last, a climatic ending of sorts. This time I can't wait. (See this is fun.) We all know that the absolute most fun about hostas is, everyone say it together, watching them emerge in the spring. Mine are coming up right now, yes, the end of February and I know the freeze is coming, but still what a thrill to watch then pop out of the ground.

Once it starts then for the next 3-4 weeks we are mesmerized. They seem to stretch so fast that one trip to the garden a day is not nearly enough. We all check them in the morning and then are amazed how much they have grown by mid-afternoon. Those huge leaves wrapped tightly like a cigar reach skyward for days before finally letting the first leaf fly free. There are very few things in life that are as exciting and by the way as dependable as spring in Hostadom.

Take the magic of your hostas again being reborn in their eternal lives on earth and couple it with the human element and

every day in early spring is filled with fun. Once the shoots are all out of the ground inventory must be taken of the number of new divisions compared to the number that fell asleep last fall. Then it is time to phone a friend, this is a too personal and treasured a moment for email, and brag a little and maybe offer some of the additional inventory in trade.

Hybridizers get the same rush when their new seedlings germinate and show a couple of true leaves. They often rush to share their baby photos with their favorite Facebook group hoping to be rewarded with lots of likes and comments. Sometimes I can almost feel the oohs and aahs coming right through my computer screen. Growing hosta seedlings is really fun even if they never find their way into a test tube.

Both hosta gardeners and hosta hybridizers love to trade hostas; it is a big part of hosta fun. I think trading hostas is more fun than buying hostas, imagine a hosta grower saying that. I feared that the introduction and spread of foliar nematodes might put an end to the "hosta swap" that hosta clubs often have at one of their meetings annually but I think we have all adjusted to the omnipresence of those pesky little worms in collector's gardens, and while still trying to limit their success, we have come to live with foliar nematodes, too.

Frequent hosta trading partners often become hosta friends and hosta friends often become hosta buying partners. Hunting for new hostas is not the addiction that other plant people make it out to be, there is fun in the chase. First there is the anticipation of seeing a hosta like no other you have ever seen and then the thrill of success of finally capturing it. Maybe it is one that you have had on your want list for years and there it is. I'm sure there was a time when you and your partner in crime were both twitching with joy finally holding this plant in your hands, discussing who would grow it in their garden until it could be divided to share. No need to buy two; that too is part of the fun.

If you have never attended the hosta auction at the AHS National Convention you have missed half the fun of buying hostas, maybe more. This auction is not about getting a bargain, or sharing a rare hosta at a good price. No, this auction is about not letting your hosta friend have that special hosta he or she so desperately wants at all if possible but worst case scenario at a very high price. Sometimes this bid forcing ever higher strategy backfires and you have to write a big check for a hosta that would look better in someone else's garden, but that just makes for a better story. This auction is great entertainment for all and also great fun.

We live in a time when travel is common and inexpensive. You do not even need to put on a coat and tie to fly across the country anymore. For young people today, traveling is their escape from their everyday lives instead of spending the weekend and long summer evenings digging in the garden. Some think these trends threaten the future of Hostadom, but I am not so sure. Visiting far away gardens even if they surround historic castles does reinforce the fun idea of having a garden of your own. When the money gets tight with the kids in college, maybe the next generation will travel down to the local hosta dealer and plant a little

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## FAQ

I am a very private person. My longevity in Hostadom has fortunately or unfortunately granted me a small measure of celebrity and I am now, I guess because I am turning gray, frequently asked about my personal involvement with hostas. That simply means that I get asked these seemingly simple questions that really have several paragraph answers. As promised this year we dig a little deeper, just a little.

### Q. What is your hybridizing philosophy?

A. First a little history. I entered Hostadom at the time of the hosta renaissance, about 1980. The first tissue culture plants were just being produced and for most of us except maybe Kevin Vaughn hosta hybridizing consisted of growing seeds. Hostadom was much smaller then, we had trouble filling two buses at the 1982 AHS National Convention in Raleigh and every facet of hostas was open to discussion.

Hosta experts far outnumbered the newbies and opinions were hotly deliberated. It seemed that everything was open to debate. Like a sponge I just want to absorb as much as I could. Back then there was always a hosta hybridizing discussion at the back of the convention bus, no one ever napped. I soon discovered to join in I would have to have some seedlings of my own. I needed something to add to the discussion, some new piece of hybridizing knowledge. So I went home and made a few crosses, grew a few seeds and soon I was in the big leagues.

My philosophy then and I guess still, is to do something that no one else is trying. That immediately ruled out working with streaked plants and variegation and when I received some of the seeds of then unnamed *H. yingeri* from the National Arboretum I decided to use this new species and see what happened. At the time I was crossing all kinds of species to combine their DNA so it was only logical to cross it with a yellow form of *H. tsushimensis* that bloomed at the same time. My goal, and breeding with a goal in mind has been part of my hybridizing philosophy from the be-



Hosta 'Lemon Snap'

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Be sure to visit our site at ... [www.HostaHosta.com](http://www.HostaHosta.com)



# Do you dream of red hostas?

**Editor’s Note:** This article appeared just 10 years ago right here in “The Green Hill Gossip”, can you believe that. It is a glimpse into how I saw the advancement of “red” hostas a year before ‘Mango Salsa’, and ‘Peach Salsa’ and seven years before the introduction of ‘First Blush’, our first red hosta. It has been quite a wild ride.

Since then, in 2013 a scientific article has also been published, “Anthocyanins of the genus of *Hosta* and their impacts on tepal colors” *Scientia Horticulturae* 150 (2013) 172–180, which measures the presence of 9 anthocyanins in hosta flowers of 86 hostas. In this article, *H. plantaginea* var. *pleno* was found to have 2 anthocyanins present in its apparently pure white flowers. You just never know.

Sometimes the evening news is worth watching, if only rarely. Last fall I saw a segment on one of the major network news programs discussing why tree leaves turn red in autumn. We all used to think that they were red all year long and we just could not see the red color because of all the green chlorophyll. As that chlorophyll started to break down as the days shortened toward winter, the hidden red color just appeared. Research in the last ten years has shown, while this unmasking does occur for the orange and yellow fall colors of tree leaves caused by the carotenoid pigments in the chloroplasts, the red color is not present in summer leaves and is actually manufactured by the plants in the fall.

So why do we hosta folks care about red

maple leaves, most of them are brown by the time we rake them from the hosta beds anyway? Well, it turns out the same chemicals, with some slight rearrangements, that turn maple leaves red, also make hosta petioles purple. Understanding how these pigments, called anthocyanins, are made in other plants might give us clues as to how they work in hostas.

Botanists are not sure what anthocyanins do to justify their existence in plant cells. There are many theories and the truth is that they probably serve different functions in different types of plants if any at all. In the trees of the Eastern Deciduous Forest, these red pigments may very well act as sunscreens to protect the plant from increased light penetration as the chlorophyll fades. They may also be “carbon sinks”, storing sugars formed during photosynthesis. They may also be a warning or even camouflage to insect predators, bugs frequently do not see red very well, especially in the young leaves of tropical rain forest species.

If you “Google” anthocyanins you will find article after article praising these blue, purple, and red pigments as antioxidants. Humans are encouraged to eat blueberries and plums, and even drink red wine for better health and increased longevity. Believe it or not, they work the same way in plants. In photosynthetic, oxygen rich cells, (oxygen gas is an abundant product of the process, thank goodness), anthocyanins capture some of that free oxygen and protect cell proteins from being oxidized. Too much oxygen can be very corrosive to plant parts.



Hosta ‘Mango Salsa’

All these functions seem plausible but many plants do just fine without anthocyanins. Frequently, plants put them in places that seem to have no function at all. It is still a mystery. Scientists assume that every molecule must have a function or it would be a waste of time

and energy to produce it. Maybe, some anthocyanins are just for decoration, like spots on cows. In any case, I will leave it to you to try to find the function of the anthocyanins that hostas put on their various body parts.

Unlike other photosynthetic pigments in plants that are found in chloroplasts, anthocyanins are stored in vacuoles, large empty warehouses in the cell. They are a group of related organic molecules that vary slightly from plant species to plant species but have the same basic structure. They are manufactured as part of the photosynthetic process using sugars as some of their building blocks. Plants produce them in high quantities in cool weather and high light intensities. They are also produced if a plant has a phosphorus deficiency. This means spring and fall are ideal times of production of anthocyanins for trees like Japanese maples. Hostas probably only produce them in the spring as they are approaching dormancy by fall.

Hostas need sunscreen in early spring with the cool, high light conditions that exist before the tree leaves have emerged. Many hostas have red or purple bud sheaths to protect the emerging “eye” from burning. Some hostas may also for a short period of time have red or purple leaf tips in early spring. As summer arrives, many hostas seem to lose some of the purple color on leaves and petioles. This may be due to heat and shadier conditions alone but probably is also caused by the fact that as hosta

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## Growing hostas to perfection

**Editor’s Note:** This article appeared in the November 2017 issue of the “Gossip Jr.”, our eight page newsletter published in August and November. The newsletter can be mailed to you with the “Green Hill Gossip” published in March for an annual fee of just \$10 or three years for \$25. Hope you enjoy it.

We all truly love our hostas and because of that we want only the best for them. We want their lives to be perfect. Hostas really are not very demanding. If necessary they can put up with difficult growing conditions and still prosper. But that is not the point. We want to pamper them, at least in spring and early summer, and that is just fine with them. I have never heard of a hosta being loved to death.

So if they could choose, what does a perfect world look like for a hosta, your favorite hosta? First, let me remind you that all hostas are not built for the same habitats in nature. Some live in deep soils, some in marshy meadows, and some even on rocks. Hosta species are hard to grow sometimes as they are adapted to narrow microclimates. However, hosta hybridizers have made the ones that frequent our gardens more generalists, happy in many



Hosta ‘Ambrosia’

spots in the garden. Let’s consider those.

In a previous newsletter, I suggested that maybe Boone, NC might be a hosta’s heaven on earth. I wrote there, “So is there such a hosta utopia somewhere in this country that has lots of rain, cool sun, cool nights and no super-hot days, and humidity? A place with an inch of rain or more a week and maybe 3 feet of snow in the winter, where the temperature rarely reaches above the upper 80’s with foggy mornings and almost daily popup afternoon showers during the summer months? Maybe it would be in zone 6a with plenty of cold dormancy for hostas but not too brutal, with a long growing season but maybe at elevation, over 3000 feet.”

Unfortunately, we cannot all move with our hostas there. Most of us are stuck on the piece of real estate on which we are currently making monthly payments. But latitude does matter, but not as much as you would think, climate is much more complicated than that. I was reminded of this when I visited Norway last month. Oslo almost twice as far from the equator as my nursery is in the same horticultural zone, 7a! Hostas in Japan grow at similar latitudes as in the US from Minneapolis to Orlando. They happily grow still further north in Amsterdam, Oslo, and Canada, even Alaska where winters are somewhat reasonable for one reason or another or there is consistent snow cover during brutal temps 20 or more below zero. So you too can create hosta utopia at almost any temperate latitude, down under, too.

Perfection for hostas begins with water. Water in the air, humidity, water falling from the sky, and water held in the soil. I do not think too much is enough. Hostas will grow in a pot in a pond or in the bed of a running shallow stream but will drown naked in a bucket of water, eventually. Shade provides humidity as well as prevents the soil beneath from rapidly drying out. Mulch does the latter, too. Clay soils hold more water than sandy ones as does those amended with organic matter. I like using bark instead of peat moss with compost to open spaces in clay soils to allow the water to penetrate deeply into the soil.

I would not try to grow hostas in any garden soil however without an irrigation system that has a programmable mind of its own. We have lots of excuses for not watering sufficiently, having to lug

hoses at summer’s hottest, removing the wax from our blue plants, encouraging slugs, or even high water bills, but with having hostas comes a commitment to water, water, water. A timer and a good well will save you a lot of guilt and consternation. Now do not let them fool you, hostas do appear and are drought resistant, but they will suffer. Summer drought may bring on dry rot in the crown shrinking your hostas back to little tissue culture plants the next spring. Lack of water in the spring will leave your clumps literally short of their true potential. A wet spring will remind you of that.

Once we have committed to keeping our hostas fully hydrated, it’s time to look at temperature. The common feeling is that hostas prefer warm not hot days, 80’s not 90’s, cool nights and dewy mornings. Most think long cold winters make stronger plants in the spring; hostas need a long winter’s nap. Spring freezes are evil but early frosts not so much. Since hostas do most of their vegetative growing each year in about 6-8 weeks in spring and early summer, that is the time when temperature, like lack of water, can have its largest effect of clump size. Consistent temperatures are best. In the South often in April we have three warm days followed by 3 cold days with lows in the 30’s. Our hostas start to jump and then rest, again and again, until they just stop. Frequently, like this year, they are half their normal size because of this roller coaster ride.

So what can we do about the temperature in our half acre gardens? We can mediate the extremes. I use frost cloth in the spring when the hostas are roaring to life and the temperatures plummet to near freezing or below. Hostas will handle 30 degrees for a night or two in a row with minimal damage but 22 degrees can turn your hosta dreams to mush. In the summer overhead watering in the afternoon in shade, not sun, will lower the air temperatures dramatically by the cooling effects of evaporation. Cooling can be achieved by extra artificial shade in sunny areas; I’ve seen many a beach umbrella employed. This will lower leaf temperatures and prevent burning in mid-summer. In the South we grow our hostas in too much shade to try to keep them cool and often they do not increase or bloom well.

Since we are talking about shade, a word is necessary about trees. (This is not one of my

dreaded asides; at least I do not think so.) Trees for all the cooling shade they provide are not our friends. Most of us started with a garden of trees and then planted hostas. (If you had hostas first and then planted trees that grow fast, well sorry... enough said.) Trees in the garden grow in full sun, not shade. They suck vast amounts of water, actually more than you can replace in a day, from your garden. The price for that shade is dry soil and oh yes, tree roots. The netted root system of shade trees will strangle the fibrous roots of a hosta. Trees are smart; their roots can find the wet, nutrient rich spots in the garden and usually that’s under your favorite hosta. Trees shrink hostas.

With that in mind let’s consider light intensity in the garden instead of just sun and shade. If you did start with a garden of hostas and wanted to reduce the light intensity to keep them cool, what is the best way? You could use plastic shade like nurseries do and reduce the light intensity evenly across the entire garden, 30%, 50 %, or 70 %. This does prevent leaf temperatures from reaching burning temperatures and promotes continuous growth on young plants, but at least in my nursery does little to really reduce air temperature like my woods do. In the garden, I would rather have periods of bright light, even full sun, at the cooler times of the day, morning, late evening, and fairly deep shade, or dappled shade in the middle of the day. Buildings make great shade, even if it just the roofline of the house. If trees provide this shade, then as they grow and close the canopy it will be necessary to not just prune them but remove a tree here and there to eliminate the tree roots as well as the unwanted shade.

You cannot discuss light intensity in the garden without mentioning latitude. As I wrote in the last issue of the “Gossip Jr.”:

“The growing season for hostas is roughly from the spring equinox, March 21 or so to the autumnal equinox September 21 or so. At those dates the sun is directly above the equator (90° angle) and light intensity is the greatest there. It is the way we generally think of light intensity on earth, greatest in the tropics and increasing less as we head north.

On June 20th or so however, because of the tilt of the planet, (the height of the hosta growing season by the way), the intensity of sunlight moves

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leaves mature they are less productive and just may not make the surplus pigments any more. Many hostas will “green up” in summer, even green ones, and this may mask some of the purple pigments present in leaves and petioles. These pigments do not totally disappear or break down because they can be seen again in the fall even after the foliage becomes clear after freezing.

Currently, there are many hosta hybridizers attempting to concentrate anthocyanins in all the parts of their hosta seedlings. This turns out to be a complex process, certainly dependent on more than one gene. It is really selecting for two very different things at the same time. First, the hosta must have the genes to be able to produce anthocyanins, most but not all hostas do. Kevin Vaughn in his article in the American Hosta Society Bulletin No. 7, page 11 found that two anthocyanins are present in the flowers of *H. cathayana*, (now ‘Lancifolia’ or *H. lancifolia*). Any hosta that has purple in its flowers should have the ability to make at least some of the purple pigments we see in foliage. In contrast, a pure white-flowered hosta like *H. plantaginea* may not have that ability and must be crossed with a purple-flowered one to acquire it. By the way, have you ever seen a pure white-flowered hosta with purple petioles? It may be possible, but I have not.

So, first a hosta must have the genes to produce anthocyanins. There are probably several different ones that the entire genus of hostas is able to produce and crossing different species may concentrate the ability to produce all these pigments into a single hosta seedling,

maybe not. This is not as simple as passing a single gene from one purple-flowered hosta to another. Building an anthocyanin molecule is a multi-step process that may take several enzymes and their corresponding genes to complete. If a single gene is missing or has mutated and a single enzyme cannot be produced then the pigment cannot be made. One gene system may produce the basic structure of the molecule and then other genes produce the variety of pigments by substituting one sugar for another. I assume purple color is produced by one gene and red by another, for example.

Producing the pigments is just the beginning. We are really dealing with a gene family here. There are also locator genes that tell the pigments where to go in our hosta, maybe one for each location. We now know that hostas can “locate” purple pigments in flowers, to attract bees, I would guess. They are also found as “sunscreen” in emerging bud sheaths and leaf tips in the coolness of spring. Hostas seem to favor vascular tissue, veins, as a site to locate anthocyanins, think of petioles, scapes, seed pods, and even leaf veins. We have even seen glimpses of purple color in the leaf blade itself, but this seems to be the most difficult location for hostas to send their purple pigments.

The intensity of purple color or how much pigment is sent to the various parts of our hosta is also controlled by these “locator” genes or other similar ones. Different genes may control not only how far up the petiole it is colored purple, but how intense the color is, and whether it is solid colored or stippled. With all this, the making of several pigments, locating them in certain parts of the plant and regulating their intensity we are now talking about a pretty big gene family. Lining up all the correct genes to create a red hosta leaf will certainly take more than a little luck.



Where are we now? Hostas with purple petioles are fairly common now. The best ones have intense color with the pigment on both the top and the bottom, extending up the midrib into the leaf blade, maybe one third the length of the leaf blade. I still use ‘One Man’s Treasure’ as a baseline for petiole color. A seedling must have better color than that old favorite, either in intensity or coverage, to be saved from the compost pile.

I have seen hostas with all the veins colored purple in the entire leaf blade, nothing dramatic but at least I know that the plant can locate the pigment there. I have seen a green hosta with bright red petioles and a thin red line of color filling the outside vein around the entire leaf blade. Still, there is nothing to run to the patent office over, but interesting. I have seen the purple pigment fill portions of the leaf blade itself but either it was soon gone with the

first warm day of spring or the hosta itself curled its leaves and turned brown. All glimpses of the success that is sure to come in the future.

What I like best and have probably worked the hardest at trying to achieve, is a bright yellow hosta with bright red petioles and veins. At this date I cannot report complete success but each generation of seedlings shows improvement. ‘Whiskey Sour’ was the first in this line and ‘Sun Worshiper’ the next generation. A new member of the family will be introduced next year but I feel the best is yet to come. Some day we will have a red hosta, I am sure, and you just never know in whose seedling patch it may pop up.

Hostas are supposed to be fun,  
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cool calm retreat in the backyard under the oaks.

Visiting gardens is great fun because I do not have to pull weeds for the price of admission; it is work free enjoyment. I like seeing another gardener’s idea of the room or rooms that surround their castle because of the way they reflect the personality of the puller of weeds. Some have huge gardens with huge hostas others just have a few along a path. Every garden I see has something interesting within its walls and something new to me.

Maybe I need to rest here a moment and let your blood pressure lower a little. Usually all this hosta fun is spread out over at least the course of a year and not just a couple of pages of text. It is amazing if you think about it how much pleasure this plant from far away has given us. Yes, we have been its willing accomplices to spread it worldwide and increase its diversity dramatically but hasn’t it been a fun ride, a party I hope never stops.

So, while you catch your breath, let’s talk food! No I do not mean eating hostas although it has been done with mixed results. Hosta folks are foodies. I do not know if they are

Bobby Flay fans but I do know they love food as much as hostas and know how to prepare some of the best home cookin’ I have ever had. Whether it is the pot luck fixin’s at a hosta club meeting or the homemade goodies in the tour gardens, hosta folks know how to tempt you to break that new diet and when isn’t eating a little something you shouldn’t fun?

Like I said before, I want to keep this party going and despite everything that has happened in the past 3 or 4 years, I intend to do my part. But we are all in this together, so how do we continue to make hostas fun? Remember new folks come to hostas for their interest in the plant and not to find new friends, hopefully instead they will bring their friends with them.

Local hosta clubs, working at the grass-roots level, are the backbone of bringing new folks to hostas. Yes, the AHS has many attractive programs but local clubs provide inexpensive events and several diverse opportunities during the course of the year. They can be the first real exposure of the home gardener to the large diversity of hostas, their size, color and availability. They not only educate but offer ways to get hostas that are not readily available at box stores or local garden centers.

People fear the Internet these days, after

all you can Google anything and have it shipped in two days to your garden. Why not hostas? There is some truth to this but what can hosta clubs do that Google cannot? That is where our emphasis should be.

Local hosta clubs have access to the royalty of Hostadom, the highest level of speakers on all subjects hosta, live and in person. No group is too big or too small to have the best speakers at least once a year. Advertise these speakers to the gardening public and other plant groups and you will see your membership lists grow. Speakers that can also bring new and exciting hostas with them usually draw the biggest crowds of the year. People come for the plants.

Speaking of plants, the annual spring hosta sale is the major fund raiser for many hosta clubs. Yes, they are a lot of work even if you purchase all the plants from local nurseries but they will bring in home gardeners that love hostas but have no desire to attend meetings, hear speakers, or enjoy the pot luck picnic. It creates fun for a wide group of gardeners of all ages especially if the plants are priced right. Make sure you get all their email addresses so you can send them your meeting times and next year’s sale date. Many club sales are completely sold out within a few hours of opening

which is what you want, no leftovers.

For years now I have pushing for a National Hosta Garden Open House Day. Hosta gardens all over the country would be open one Sunday afternoon, (or Saturday Morning), in June for everyone from young couples with babies in strollers to Master Gardeners to visit. It’s not like you are on tour at the National Convention, just cut the grass, pull the obvious weeds, and put out a few cookies for the kids and you are good to go. Clubs could print up a little flyer with the addresses or just post it on your website but you must advertise it on all the gardening media available. Hopefully the AHS would take care of “Good Morning America” and the others. Let’s do this, it will be fun!

Local clubs should also do their part and host a regional meeting every 5-10 years. It is really easier than you think and you will get lots of help from everyone in the Region. The program can be whatever you like, although I would like to see more hands on events that will attract the public. Imagine a walk through the garden lead by one of the recognizable names of Hostadom just chatting about what is interesting that day. I’d love to do that again,

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FAQ

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ginning, was to take the substance of *H. yingeri* and combine it with the translucent color of what we then called “Golden Tsushimensis”.

The result was ‘Whiskey Sour’ and that’s when the red petioles caught my eye. I now became more like the geneticists that I had studied in graduate school and began crossing siblings. You all know the end of the story, several generations and several out crosses later and ‘First Blush’<sup>PP289/20</sup> appeared through some simple science and the grace of God.

So I am a goal oriented hybridizer. I do not grow vast numbers of seeds often but make the next cross that makes sense in getting to the goal. The goal often changes along the way from yellow leaves to red petioles to red leaves but the process is the same. I also try the difficult crosses. That

too reduces the number of seeds I grow since many of those seeds do not set or if they do they do not germinate. I want something really different, not just another beautiful hosta. And I do think my plants have a different, unique look that probably goes back to the mixing of all those species in the beginning.

**Q. Do you have time for hobbies?**

**A.** No, but I make time. For many years people close to me have accused me of always thinking about my hosta business, to the point of even dreaming about it. There is some truth to that but that’s what business owners do when they have employees and family depending on them. It is not necessarily a bad thing.

With my first family, when the business and the kids were small we would spend a week at the North Carolina beach, a family vacation. By Thursday I had finally relaxed and then on Friday evening we started packing up to come home. I lobbied for a second week every year but our spouse’s businesses would not allow that. Since then the beach has always been my retreat and you can ask my em-

ployees how many times a week I threaten to escape there for the weekend but weekends are sometimes my busiest times at the nursery and on the road so I rarely go.

There is a difference between vacation and having a hobby, a second passion that does not make you money. Maybe four or five years ago now I decided I needed a hobby, something to do just for fun. Of course the beach would be involved but it would have to be one of those winter hobbies like the ones that Northern hosta growers seem to have to survive their snowy winters. It would have to be an outdoor activity with some intellectual interest.

So I have really combined two hobbies into one. I bike at the beach in winter and observe the migratory water fowl. I have adopted Chincoteague Island and the nearby Assateague Refuge on the Virginia Eastern Shore where until 3:00PM it is just me, my bike and the ducks, swans and geese, no cars. I have vowed not to be a serious birdwatcher and never create the bird lists that they so cherish or even know the names of all the birds. It is a hobby after all, and I am there just to soak up the whole frozen scene, without a hosta in sight.



# Can you name this hosta?

**Editor's Note:** This article first appeared in the August 2017 edition of the "Gossip Jr." If you enjoy reading my ramblings you can subscribe, \$10 per year or three years for \$25.

It always begins with a confession. "I lost the label". Or even more encouraging, "I didn't used to care about names but now I want to know which hostas I already have." The hosta bug is starting to work its magic.

For thirty years people have been bringing me hosta leaves with the hope that I could put a name with them, or I should say the correct name. Way back then it was pretty easy. There were not the 10,000 or so names from which to choose as there are now, everyone had pretty much the same 25 or so hostas, collected or inherited from a relative or neighbor. Nurseries carried the same old standards before the explosion of varieties that the tissue culture revolution brought in the 1990's.

There were for example four common little blue ones that I sold, 'Blue Cadet', 'Serendipity', 'Pearl Lake' and 'Blue Boy'. While they were similar they each had their own unique characteristics. 'Pearl Lake' was the one with the nice flowers, thin substance, and greenest leaves. 'Blue Cadet' had thicker and bluer leaves and made a tighter clump. 'Blue Boy' was bigger and to my taste the plainest of the four while 'Serendipity' had long petioles for a more open look and smaller

more perfectly heart-shaped leaves. I can see still all four of these in the "Hosta Library" inside my head.

That's how things were when we could get our minds around almost all the hostas that we would commonly see. I remember that in the early 1980's if a garden had 250 different hostas it was world class. Now most hosta nurseries list more than that number and some collectors boast of 3000 or more different cultivars. I'm sure they can identify all of them in their garden without looking at the label, mostly by location, but would they know them in yours or my garden?

That brings us to the usual rambling aside that falls in the fifth or sixth paragraph of most of my articles. Unlike postage stamps, pottery, or other collectables, even plants grown for their flowers, the foliage of hostas can vary dramatically from garden to garden and from Northern gardens to Southern gardens. It varies with the age of the clump and how well it is grown, poorly or maxed out. It varies from May to August and in shade and too much sun. You could almost say that no two hosta clumps of the same cultivar look the same, but they do!

So that picture we have in the archives between our ears of say 'Sum and Substance', (a hosta that we can all agree is distinct enough to know wherever you see it), was it grown on the south side of someone's house or in a container in deep shade? Does it have pointed sun



Hosta 'Fruit Loop'

leaves or big round lazy shade leaves? How do we compensate for the differences? Well we have several pics in the folder labeled 'Sum and Substance' one of each size and type that we have seen and then associate them together. Yes, the brain is a wonderful thing.

Hosta color, the characteristic we depend on most for identification is the most mercurial of all hosta traits. Not only does shade and sun change the color of a particular hosta but so does season. Yellows turn green, blues turn

green, and greens darken or lighten. All hostas change their color over the course of the growing season, making for more photos that must be remembered and filed.

Some hostas we only visit, maybe only once and others we live with. We are more familiar with our neighbors than their cousins in far flung parts of the country. Some we only see at home and may not recognize in a convention garden. That's why tour gardens are

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## What Hostas Have Taught Us: Part 1

Humans are the most intelligent organisms on Earth, if we say so ourselves. I have my doubts but having self-awareness and a well-developed language does allow us to form opinions about the world in which we live. Some think the truth lies in a greater consciousness of the universe while others put their trust in science. I lean heavily toward the latter, constantly gathering data and organizing it in some seemingly reasonable way in my mind, but I am also aware of the great unknown. Some of my



Hosta 'Curly Fries'

existence frequently appears illogical and some is truly magic.

Scientists can be hard headed clinging to the theories that made them who they are. I think we are all a little like that, maybe a lot, stubbornly set in our time proven ways. They say you cannot teach an old hosta grower new tricks and if it ain't broke don't mess with it. But I am still open to new ideas when upgraded knowledge presents itself. (I have changed potting mix and fertilizer again, very scary!)

I think plants are smarter than we are, I really do. We think that just because they can't run and we can catch them and eat them, they lack intelligence. They were here long before us and probably will be here after we have all moved to Mars to avoid global flooding. They will just adapt kudzu-like and flourish in the CO<sub>2</sub> rich atmosphere we have provided them. We are actually improving their lives while degrading ours, if you buy everything you hear and assume that we humans are too stupid to adapt to a changing world through improved technology.

In any case I think plants in general and hostas in particular have a lot to share with us if we will just listen. So this is the first in a multi-series of short articles describing what I think hostas have taught us. Much of it is selfishly about them, but some is about us too.

New hostas are created in two ways, through sexual reproduction and through sporting. Hostas did not create sexual reproduction; we and they have a common ancestor that learned that trick millions and millions of years ago. And while hostas did not invent sporting either, they may have perfected it to a point that they would win all the gold medals in the sporting Olympics.

Man has aggressively manipulated the sex habits of hostas to produce a wide range of new genetic combinations using the knowledge we have gained by self-examining our own reproduction. We learned early on that the variegation in hostas is maternally inherited, from the pod parent only, (from the mom), since it a product of passing along whole chloroplasts to next generation. It is akin to the inheritance of our own mitochondrial DNA, that also forms a maternal line. (Hostas have mitochondria too that are similarly maternally inherited.)

We learned that in most cases but not all, because those variegated chloroplast sometime hide undetected in the green center of hostas leaves, the pod parent needs to have streaks of variegation through the middle of the leaf to produce variegated seedlings. These seedlings are usually streaked like their mom and their leaf patterns will vary from leaf to leaf until they "stabilize". Some seedlings stay mostly streaked but almost all either form a variegated margin, a variegated leaf center or become solid color, losing their variegation at least to the human eye. (Some variegated chloroplasts probably also remain in those solid colored plants but are too few and far between to color the leaf.)

Herb Benedict described this phenomenon as what was come to be known as the Benedict Cross. Basically, from a streaked parent you could expect to get 3 more plants, one with a variegated border, one with a variegated leaf center and one solid colored, blue, yellow or green plant. In tissue culturing streaked hostas they taught us that if we would feed them a high sugar diet they would produce a fourth all variegated, white plant as predicted by the Benedict Cross but it is unable to live on its own since it has little or no chlorophyll. So from streaked plants we get a nice family of a green plant, a white plant, a bordered plant and a centered plant, simple, really, simple good human logic.

It seemed like good logic to also think that when hostas sported, changing their colors on their own, they would follow these rules too. If a yellow hosta sported a green streak or two then we could expect to get a nice family of four hostas, a yellow one, a green one, a green bordered one and a green centered one. And in the beginning we did and congratulated ourselves for being able to predict hosta behavior.

'August Moon' was one of the first if not the first yellow, (gold), hosta to be mass produced by tissue culture in the late 1970's and early 1980's. I purchased some of those first plants from Walters Gardens thinking like everyone else that all the plants would come true to type since it was a solid colored

plant. Variegated plants like 'Frances Williams' were proving to be a problem to propagate. A large number of "culls" were produced that were either all blue or all gold. To recoup their costs the yellow off types were named and sold as 'Golden Sunburst' as we had very few yellow hostas in the trade at that time.

But 'August Moon' should not cause us any of the same problems since it was already genetically yellow and not a sport. Then the collective mind of hostas decided to show us one of their little tricks. In 'Frances Williams' they could turn blue into gold but they could also turn gold into green. Soon dark green streaks started appearing in mine and other's 'August Moon' plants. Most of them disappeared the next year but some Benedict Cross style started to form a green margin or a green center. My 'September Sun', a dark green-margined form, was the first registered in 1985. Many more soon followed as tissue culture had accelerated the process that may have taken decades if garden division was the only means of propagation. 'Mayan Moon' and 'Abiqua Moonbeam' were the first green-centered forms introduced. Yes, hostas had taught us a new trick they could do.

All still seemed within our human experience with hostas as the concept of the Benedict Cross seemed to remain in place. What we did not realize fully was what we thought we were seeing as "variegation" in these new sports was really caused by a different mechanism. Yes, chloroplasts were mutated but it was not their DNA that changed, it was the DNA in the cell nucleus that became able to produce the green color in yellow hostas. Thus the color change was not maternally inherited but could be affected by either parent or even, neither if the mutation had not happened in the cells that produce pollen and eggs.

So everything remained copacetic until Walters Gardens starting listing my plant 'September Sun' in their catalogue. You have to remember, tissue culture did not rule Hostadom at that point in time and I was selling hand divided pieces of my new plant at \$75.00 each. I knew how many plants there were in the world and who had them. So it raised a red flag when Walters Gardens listed 'September Sun' since they did not get the plant from me and had not had time to produce a sufficient quantity by tissue culture since it was introduced.

I was a customer of theirs of course so I had no problem inquiring where they got their stock plants of 'September Sun'. They said they found it in their plants and assumed it was the same plant as mine and named it accordingly, logical enough, I had no problem with that. To make a long story short, it turns out that their plant had a lighter green margin than 'September Sun', a color not predicted by the Benedict Cross. (The same thing happened to me with the plants 'Alex Summers' and 'Rascal'. In this case my 'Rascal' had a lighter center not a darker margin, also not predicted by the Benedict Cross.)

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## CAN YOU NAME THIS HOSTA?, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

supposed to have labels, so we can add photos to the hosta folders in our brain. So in reality, hostas are not as easy to identify as US coins, but at least we do not need a magnifying glass to do so.

Okay, I’m back. These days folks still bring me leaves to identify. It’s a fun test I actually enjoy, although now the examination is often very humbling. They always bring me a very small leaf, one that won’t be missed from the clump, maybe even the last one the poor hosta has produced. Somehow I usually know and ask, “Is this a large hosta.” It is not too hard to identify a 2 inch long leaf of ‘Frances Williams’ if you know human nature but bring me something with a white edge and I don’t have a clue.

Recently, however people just hand me their phone and point and say, “That one.” Now it still amazes me that everyone now seems to carry around with them a 10 megapixel camera in their back pocket and that it can take some great photos, especially indoors at parties just as things are starting to get a little out of hand. But they are not the greatest in the hosta garden for true color. That said I can usually adjust for that; I do have some pretty big mental folders on some hostas.

Some hostas are easy. ‘Sum and Substance’, ‘Guacamole’, ‘First Frost’ and several others are recognizable. Someone recently said there are only 500 of the 10,000 hostas that are easily identified by most of us. I think that number may be half of that or less, but sometimes I do surprise myself. Some hostas are impossible to correctly name, especially if they are big blue *H. sieboldiana* children. That is where the process of elimination comes in.

It is easier for me to tell you what’s not the name for your hosta than to come up with the truly correct one. In other words, if I visit a garden, I can pick out quickly all the mislabeled plants. I might not be able to tell you what the correct name of them is but I know what you have on the label is wrong. You see that is how our DNA is designed to work. Cavemen needed to see small changes in their surroundings, a slight movement, something that is just not right. They needed to see the saber tooth tiger before the tiger saw them. We know something is wrong first and then we need to search our memory to figure out what it is.

So when the name of the hosta is not immediately obvious, the process of elimination proceeds and the questions begin as I try to narrow down the choices. (Cavemen did this too.) The first question is usually, “How long have you had this hosta?” If the answer is six months or a year then you still have 10,000 hostas to choose from but if the answer is, “Oh, forever” then you have narrowed the field greatly.

The next question follows from the first,

“Where did you get it?” Did you buy it at Home Depot? Did you buy it at vending at the AHS National Convention? Did you buy it from me? Did your grandmother give it to you? Answers to these questions not only narrow the inventory in which it is found but also the time frame. Hopefully we are now dealing with a handful of choices and not still hundreds.

Then I usually go in an unusual direction and this requires me to open a different database stored in my head, the flower pictures. “When does it bloom?” What color are the flowers?” “Are they fragrant, and very large?” Maybe it is the botanist in me but I find flowers, especially bloom time a good eliminator of large groups of similar looking hostas. I am working a botanical key of sorts. A woman around Memorial Day brought me an immature blue hosta leaf but also a scape of just opening flowers. I knew immediately it was ‘Blue Angel’, not from the leaf but the flowers, star of bracts, and bloom time.

Incidentally, ‘Blue Angel’ is one of those 500 hostas we all think we can identify easily. If you are from the South and are used to seeing ‘Blue Angel’ as a wide spreading, up to 7 feet across clump of large pointed, sometimes almost spade-shaped leaves blooming in early June go to the upper Midwest and you will not recognize its almost round leaves on a much taller clump blooming a month later. I have to keep several duplicate pictures of that one in my mental files.

Flowers are also great for old hostas. *H. plantaginea* has very large pure white very fragrant trumpets in August. *H. ventricosa* has rich purple bells in June or July on straight scapes that set every seed pod. ‘Undulata Albomarginata’ has the floppy scapes that everyone hates. ‘Lancifolia’ blooms in September with purple flowers with let’s optimistically say arching scapes. The flower scapes of *H. montana* children have the characteristic star of bracts as they emerge. All good stuff!

That said, now the process gets harder and iffier. We have now used up all our tricks and must actually study the leaf or phone photo. So what characteristics are important and in which order do we check them off. Here is how the whole system works. I look at clump habit first. Very few hostas are extremely upright and very few are wide spreading. Then...

Oh no, another aside!!! Green hostas are often easier to identify than variegated ones. Green hostas that have been named are rarely without a lot of character, they’re green so they have to have more bells and whistles to be distinct. They cannot get by on beauty alone like their variegated cousins. All these added ruffles, puckers, and vein patterns make them more recognizable.

All variegated hostas, unless they are sports which are entirely different animals, must be from a few singular breeding lines.

Since those variegated chloroplasts are maternally inherited, new genetic combinations are introduced into the line only by the pollen parent. Green hostas can have radical combinations of genes from both parents. As a result variegated hostas tend to look like they married their first cousins keeping a family resemblance. If you know the family, Kevin Vaughn, Dick Ward, and to some extent Eleanor Lachman used the same variegated lines, then you can narrow your name guesses but again the plants start to look pretty similar at some point. (Maybe that is why white-margined hostas are getting harder and harder to sell. They are beautiful but look too similar.)

Since I mentioned them, sports are usually easy to identify. Their parents are fairly common, widely grown hostas, and if you know the parent you can guess the sport. Sports of ‘Fragrant Bouquet’ and ‘Halcyon’ and now even ‘Blue Mouse Ears’ are easy to name if you just know which form of sport they are. It does require a lot of attention to detail but is fairly easy since we see these sports so often.

Okay, okay, so we have this green hosta and it is large and upright. It has nice tight ruffles on pointed leaves and the *H. montana* star flower inflorescence. What is it? Here is another. This huge hosta has lighter green leaves and a wide spreading habit. The veins form a cross stitch pattern and the scapes are very tall and rangy, able to grab small pets and pull them under the clump. You know both of these green hostas even without smart phone photographic help. Combine clump habit, size, color, leaf shape, texture, (ruffles, puckers, and veins), and substance and solid color hostas are not impossible to identify.

In the old days, counting veins was always part of trying to name an unknown hosta. *H. sieboldiana* seedlings had 14 or more vein pairs, ‘Fortunei’ sports and the “Tardianas” 9 or so vein pairs and ‘Kabitan’ and other *H. sieboldii* minis 3 vein pairs. Hostas were still more closely related to the species then. Now with all the years of hybridization especially with variegation, many *H. sieboldiana* and *H. sieboldii* crosses have been made and most hosta hybrids now fall in the mid-range of vein counts, say 5-9 vein pairs and that is not very helpful.

Vein counting is useful however for a few hostas that have an unusually large number of veins like ‘Tidewater’, in fact it is its strong venation that makes it distinct. I might still resort to counting veins when I am stumped on a certain identification these days, not so much to know how many there are but to buy a little time and look like I know what I am doing.

Other traits, (I like to call accessories, like those on your new pickup truck,) can be very useful too, but only if you have recorded that data in your mental library. ‘Lemon Meringue’ and its sports are wide spreading hostas with round leaves similar to ‘Sum and Substance’

but have very white leaf backs distinguishing them. If you have never turned a hosta leaf over then that information is useless. I do it all the time. It is a little risqué but hostas seem to love it.

Petiole color has become the rage lately, that and red leaves. Many similar looking hostas do or do not have colored petioles so this trait can sometimes act as a tie breaker. Again you have to have been paying attention to this for some time for it to be useful but most of you are beginning to now even if you have not gone hog wild. The difference in color, red versus purple might be the key or how far it extends into the leaf but remember color fades with the heat of summer and what is there in early spring is often invisible in late summer.

I do break petiole color into what I call purple pigments and red pigments. This does help with identification. Hostas like my ‘Mango Salsa’, ‘Peach Salsa’ and ‘Beet Salad’ have red pigments and my ‘Sugar Plum’ and ‘Plum Pudding’ have purple pigments. ‘First Blush’ has both and the color reflects this. This is easy for me to see since I have been working with these colors for years but I think it is very easy for anyone to visualize once you look at it this way.

There are a few other traits I use to identify hostas. Weird as it sounds, growth rate. If it is one of those hostas that does not grow then it may be easy to recognize, think ‘Tokudama’. If it grows like a weed and we always see it as a robust clump, like ‘Golden Tiara’, (coupled with its unique leaf shape) that might be the tipping factor, too.

If a hosta that has some terrible flaw, that can help identify it also. I always know ‘Invincible’ by the slug holes. I love the irony. ‘Sugar Daddy’ a sport of ‘Big Daddy’, (‘Ice Age Trail’) develops a “saw tooth” edge on its beautiful variegated margins as does ‘Knock-out’. Think of those minis that struggle to grow. It’s easy to identify ‘Cat’s Eye’ as it struggles to survive each spring. Yes this tip is a little bizarre but sometimes you need all the help you can get.

Finally, one last aside. Trying to match up your unknown hosta to a picture on the Hosta Library or the **Hostapedia** is a waste of time. (Yes, that is my opinion and can be debated if you like. But that is why you pay to get this little newsletter, for my sometimes off the wall opinions.) I think if you just take a little time and study the hosta through the entire growing season, rack your brain to try to remember where it came from and narrow the number of choices you can probable get pretty close if not right on. If all that fails then send me a photo, HostaBob@gmail.com and I will gladly tell you what it is not.

By the way, as you know, the two green hostas above are ‘Niagara Falls’ and ‘Elatior.’“

# Planting Instructions ...

Hostas perform best when planted with ferns 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 2-3 feet wide is prepared to a depth of 9-12 inches. When planted in the woods with wildflowers it is important to remove all surface tree roots within 2 feet of each hosta clump.

**Bed Preparation:** The most important ingredient in successful hosta growing is bed preparation. Good hosta soil should remain moist after a good rain yet drain well. It should have enough organic matter to provide plenty of air spaces for vigorous root growth but be firm enough to discourage voles and other rodents. It should have high fertility and a light covering of mulch to keep the soil cool in summer and retain moisture. Here is how we do it at Green Hill Farm.

First the area to be planted is completely tilled with our old Troy Built tiller to its maximum depth of 8-9 inches. We remove all the surface tree roots 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 some 10-10-10 fertilizer to “feed the bark.” We usually use coarse pine bark nuggets in our beds that are locally available in bulk, but well-rotted sawdust, compost or manure will also work well. The coarser the organic material is the larger the air spaces in the soil will be and the longer they will remain in the soil.

The addition of gravel gives the bed mass, moderating soil temperatures as well as making it firmer. Also, it is a vole deterrent. If you can dig in your bed easily with your hands then the voles can too. We no longer spread gravel over the entire bed and till it in to a depth of 4-5 inches, although it has worked well for us in the past. We just add gravel where we plant our hostas and other perennials that voles might eat.

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 than 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 rest the crown upon and cover it with about an inch of 3/8 inch gravel, either crushed granite or pea gravel. Take the bare rooted hosta and run its roots down the hill. Cover the roots and crown with another inch or so of gravel, making a hosta and gravel sandwich. Loosely fill the hole with soil that has been amended with some slow release fertilizer or manure (especially if planting in the spring). 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 your local favorite. Remember to keep the mulch off the hosta petioles in order to discourage fungal diseases. Also, deep mulches encourage voles.

**When to plant:** Hostas can be successfully planted any time that the ground can be worked. The best times to plant hostas are when they are actively making 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 establish a good root system before the droughts of summer in the first case and before they go dormant 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 untangled. 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. Pinching a leaf or two will also reduce desiccation shock and usually stimulate another flush of leaves. Hostas usually 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 maximum 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 invade your beds robbing your hostas of water 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.





*Hosta 'Jet Black'*



*Hosta 'Blue Perfection'*



*H*



*Hosta 'Love of My Life'*



*Hosta 'Curly Fries'*



*Hosta 'Lemon Zinger'*



*Hosta 'Tom Terrific' leaves*





*Hosta 'Road Rage'*



*Hosta '1st and Ten'*



*Hosta 'X-cellent'*



*Hosta 'Heather Hill'*



*Hosta 'World Cup'*



### HOSTAS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE FUN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

like I did in Knoxville last summer. Take a chance, it’s okay. Your event does not have to be the biggest and best ever, we will all still have fun.

Yes, there is lots that we can do to spread hosta fun but there are things not to do also, and I see this all the time. Do not hold long business meetings with a report from every committee. Keep it in the board room. Imagine you are coming as a stranger to hear a great talk on hostas and for the first 30 minutes you find yourself in a planning session for the plant sale next month. Remember, they came for the hostas, not to be club members, elect your officers quickly and then introduce the speaker.

It is easy to recruit new members in your comfort zone, but do not get stuck in there. Reach out to younger folks who are fascinated by plants and let them fall in love with hostas. Start with the staff at the local garden centers, they might only come for one activity per year but if you let them bring plants and ask them to speak you might get a member for life. Try the local colleges and high schools too. Offer a “field trip” to a great local hosta garden or two to see the magic of

hostas placed shoulder to shoulder, covering all the areas that won’t grow grass.

Have you ever been to a hosta meeting where the talk never mentioned hostas at all or even worse, the only time hostas were mentioned deer or foliar nematodes were the subjects of the same sentence? I have. Remember those first time visitors, they came for the hostas, even if the talk does not center on hostas at least do something else, Q & A that includes them and increases their hosta knowledge and desire.

Sometimes those question and answer sessions become discussions of everything that is problematic with growing hostas. Yes, we are hosta experts; we know the scary stuff as well as the joy but let’s focus on the latter. Ask “What your favorite hosta is this spring or what exciting new hostas are on your want list?” Put the focus on the plant and not the problem. Remember, **Hostas are supposed to be fun!**™ . (You thought I was joking.)

Most of all we need exciting new hostas! On the market!!! We have many great hybridizers right now trying new things. Some are working to make hosta leaves red while others are breeding tetraploid hostas in hopes of broadening the range of traits that hosta have. Some are hybridizing for the biggest hostas while others the smallest. Some want hostas to have flowers like

daylilies. They will produce lots of fun new hostas that just need to find their way into a hosta catalogue or hosta nursery near you.

That’s my job and the job of a few others of us, to bring the best new hostas to you. And yes it is supposed to be fun, fun for us, too. The hosta business has been in constant change in the past five years, some of the major suppliers on which we all relied in one way or another are now gone. The hosta market while still robust has become consolidated. All this is starting to change again, and change for the better. Social media has provided a new way to market hostas and now small growers have a ready group of buyers at good prices. Others are filling the need for hosta liners at the wholesale level, introducing new plants while bringing back some of the best of the past. The market is wide open and we’re hiring!

I have always said that the hosta collector drives the hosta market, not the tissue culture labs. So tell me what you want and let’s see if we can come up with it. Nothing is more fun than seeing the excitement that a new hot hosta can bring to a convention vending room. The news of the purchase of that new and sometimes expensive plant spreads like foliar nematodes throughout the hotel. Everybody comes down and wants to see it and touch it... and then maybe wait for

the price to come down so they don’t exceed the limit on their credit card. It is that excitement to the point of almost trembling that makes growing hostas for you fun for me.

I remember the first time I went to Minnesota in 1990 to see their hostas of legend and myth. It was a good year for hostas, (Minnesota has drought just like the rest of us I have come to understand), and they did not disappoint. There is nothing better than jumping off a bus and wading through a waist high sea of hostas. That joy has reoccurred for me in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and even Georgia. I never take it for granted and love the feel of that anticipation as I drag myself onto the convention bus after another late night of talking hostas. But that’s half the fun, too.

Growing hostas for a living, no I do not have another job or oil wells, can be exhausting in the spring from fighting late freezes to getting all the orders pulled, bare rooted and shipped, and everything else that goes wrong along the way. There are days that I would give the nursery away to the first person that would pay for my one way airfare to the tropics. The hosta business is not always as easy as it looks, but I don’t really think I would rather do anything else. After all, **Hostas are supposed to be fun!**™ And most days here they are.

## SPRING 2018

### Complete Retail Hosta Listing

♥ indicates our introductions

#### “New and exciting!!!”

- ♥ **‘First Blush’**<sup>PP28, 920</sup> (Solberg 2015) - (48/49 seedling X ‘Beet Salad’) - Medium, (12” X 24”) ‘First Blush’ not only has green leaves with red petioles that extend into the leaf blade but also a thin red margin around the leaf, similar but much more dramatic than its parent ‘Beet Salad’. However, the most exciting thing about ‘First Blush’ is that in spring the leaf between the veins will start to “blush” red from the tip of the leaf down toward the base. The leaves remain red here until temperatures surpass 92 degrees, usually into June. The color should persist longer in Northern gardens. Our first red-leafed hosta. **\$35**
- ♥ **‘Dragon Scales’** (Solberg 2018) - (‘Dragon Tails’ sport) - Mini, (5” X 10”) Everyone loves ‘Dragon Tails’, well this is a green form of that ruffled, narrow-leafed mini. It grows quickly and is perfect for a feathery upright addition to a bowl of yellow and variegated minis. Pale purple flowers appear in July. **\$20**
- ‘Fruit Loop’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ([[‘Minuta’ F1 seedling B X ‘Shining Tot’) X (‘Lakeside Looking Glass op.)) - Small, (7” X 13”) Not quite a mini, this very small hosta has very bright wide white margins on cute little round leaves that are cupped and puckered. It has good substance and makes a tight, neat clump. It will brighten up any mixed container or trough! **\$35**
- ♥ **‘Heather Hill’** (M. Zilis, Solberg 2018) – (‘Lime Zest’ sport) – Mini to Small, (5” X 14”) This sport of ‘Lime Zest’ was a wonderful surprise. Sometimes hostas create the best hostas all on their own. This fast growing very small hosta develops a bright white margin and is very happy in morning sun. It makes a great garden plant as well as a welcome addition to your container collection. Introduced with Heather Hill Gardens in Fairfax Station, VA. **Special \$25**
- ‘Jet Black’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2017) - (Mary Chastain 04 B1 streaked seedling X ‘Skylight’) - Large, (24” X 56”) This is a very blue hosta that grows quickly into a large mound. It has lots and lots of powdery white wax that softens the appearance of its sturdy cupped and puckered leaves. Near white, nicely proportioned flowers appear in late June. Another great landscape hosta from Doug Beilstein. **\$25**
- ♥ **‘Lemon Kiss’** (Solberg 2018) – (‘Smiley Face’ X ‘Beet Salad’) – Small, (6” X 14”) Sometimes hybridizers have a good thing but still want to make it better. ‘Lemon Kiss’ is an improvement on our very popular ‘Smiley Face’. It is a cross of ‘Smiley Face’ back to ‘Beet Salad’. The result is a bright yellow very small hosta with good substance and intense red petioles. You just have to touch it to believe it. **\$35**
- ♥ **‘Lemon Snap’** (Solberg 2018) – ([‘Smiley Face’ X ‘Beet Salad’] X [‘Peacock Strut’ X ‘Beet Salad’]) – Medium, (10” X 20”) This hosta is the headliner of the next generation of our yellow hostas with bright red

petioles. The leaves can be cupped up to really the red as it saturates the midrib sometimes to near the middle of the leaf. The cupping is a new leaf shape for this line of breeding with some puckers thrown in here and there. In mid-summer a very dark purple scape emerges with pretty purple striped flowers in a tight mass. A great breeder, too. **Order early \$65**

♥ **‘Love of My Life’** (Solberg 2017) - (‘Sun Shower’ X ‘Designer Genes’ sport) - Medium, (14” X 30”) Yes, I love this very special hosta. It is a cross of my ‘Sun Shower’ and ‘Designer Genes’ that sported right away from an all yellow plant to one with a green edge. Having H. longipes and H. sieboldiana genes, in many ways it is like ‘June’ but more robust. In addition, it also has red petioles and pinkish purple scapes. It is very sexy in the spring! **\$55**

♥ **‘Mouse Madness’** (M. Zilis, Solberg 2017) - (‘Solar Mouse’ sport) - Mini, (5” X 12”) Maybe the best of the mice so far, this white-edged sport of the all-white and almost impossible to grow ‘Solar Mouse’ is very vigorous. ‘Mouse Madness’ emerges with very bright white margins in the spring that do not melt but stay attractive well into late summer. A must for your collection of mice. **Limited \$40**

**‘Road Rage’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2018) Medium, (15” X 27”) Some may say this is an ugly hosta, but most of us think it only weird, and weird is good, in this case very good. ‘Road Rage’ moves ‘Leapin’ Lizard’ a little farther up the road. It has variable green leaves that yes they are puckered but have extra ridges that protrude upward. Yes, weird! It is medium in size and seems to grow very well. From Doug Beilstein, it is certainly a conversation starter. **\$35**

- ♥ **‘Sharp Dressed Man’** (Solberg 2005) - (‘Francee’ seedling) - Medium, (15” X 36”) This one was a surprise, unique in both its leaf shape and coloration. The leaves are very thick with wide green margins and pure white centers with a wonderful streaking of a third lighter green color in between. It grows very well, never melting out or burning. Lavender flowers in July. It is both handsome and elegant, named for my son Michael. **\$25**
- ♥ **‘Tom Terrific’** (Solberg 2018) – (48/49 X ‘Key West’) – Large, (24” X 40”) This is the first of our large yellow hostas with purple petioles. It is a cross of ‘Key West’ with our best purple petiole breeder. It has rounded puckered leaves showing its H. sieboldiana heritage and remains yellow all season. It is named for Tom Micheletti, good friend and past president of the AHS, as well as the cartoon superhero on Captain Kangaroo. Remember when? **\$50**
- ‘X-cellent’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2018) Small-Medium (11”X 30”) I love this hosta. It has a classic beauty. Doug Beilstein is selecting for wide-margined, narrow-centered variegated hostas. He is also choosing yellow medio-variegation over white. The result is a yellow-centered, blue-green hosta that grows very well. It is small to medium making a tight clump. Perfect in a container or in the front of the bed. **\$35**

#### Medium to Large Hostas:

**‘1st and Ten’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - (‘Brutus’ X BEV3-MOM seedling) - Very Large, (32” X 50”) This

is a big hosta! It is almost 3 feet tall with very large shovel-like blue-green leaves with good substance. Part of Doug Beilstein’s gridiron series, it is a seedling from his very popular ‘Brutus’. I love its dramatic leaf veins and upright habit. **\$25**

♥ **‘Ambrosia’**<sup>PPAF</sup> (Solberg 2015) - (Sport of ‘Guacamole’) - Large, (24” X 54”) Ambrosia is “the food of the gods” and this hosta is certainly good enough to eat. It is simply divine. It is a blue-margined, light yellow-centered sport of my own ‘Guacamole’ that performs just as well in the garden, making a large clump that enjoys bright light. Like ambrosia it is fragrant and may also have the same mythological healing powers. This hosta is close to perfection. **\$25**

♥ **‘Blue Perfection’** (Solberg 2015) - (Sport of ‘Ambrosia’<sup>PPAF</sup>) - Large, (24” X 54”) This is the fast growing, fragrant-flowered blue, yes blue hosta, for which we have all been waiting. It has very waxy blue leaves that are enhanced when grown in half a day of cool sun. The light lavender flowers that arrive in late July are very fragrant, unlike other “fragrant blue” hostas. You have got to try this one. **\$20**

**‘Blueberry Waffles’** (Sandy Brown 2008) - (‘Spilt Milk’ x ‘Abiqua Drinking Gourd’) - Very Large, (30” X 68”) This is the one you have all been waiting for!!! Maybe it is the huge almost perfectly round leaves, or their deep blue color, the color of blueberries, with all the perfect puckering, or maybe just the impressive mound of foliage that makes it the perfect specimen, (probably all three), but this is a spectacular hosta that you can’t get out of your mind. It flowers with its H. sieboldiana kin in June. It’s destined to be one of the hottest hostas of the year. **\$20**

- ‘Fashionista’** (M. Zilis 2011) - (Sport of ‘Designer Genes’) - Medium, (14” X 30”) You can blame me for this one. The first time I saw this white-margined sport of the bright yellow ‘Designer Genes’, I had to have it. Curious to see how well it would grow I tested a few plants for Mark and it passed with flying colors. It has the same bright red petioles and scapes as its parent. A riot of color in a container. **\$20**
- ♥ **‘Honey Bear’** (Solberg 2017) - (‘Honey Pie’ sport) - Large, (20” X 42”) The rich green and yellow combination of color of this fragrant-flowered sport of my hosta ‘Honey Pie’ is an eye stopper in the garden. At maturity the leaves become rounded and somewhat puckered with a dark green leaf center and a honey-colored margin. Like its parent it is sun tolerant and grows rapidly. **\$30**
- ♥ **‘Honey Pie’** (Solberg 2012) - (‘September Sun’ X *H. plantaginea*) - Large, (18” X 40”) This 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. It is a large hosta, a cross of ‘September Sun’ and H. plantaginea, having the best characteristics of both parents. Give this one a little extra sun also. **\$20**
- ‘Hovercraft’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2016) - (*H. laevigata* X op. seedling) - Medium, (16” X 30”) I really like this hosta even as a little liner. I like the roundness of the leaves and the nice blue color. It too is a large classic form hosta but with a little more open look as the leaves seem to float over their petioles. A fine blue

### Our New Hostas for 2017



from Doug Beilstein. **\$25**

- ‘Icy Halo’** (C. Tomashek 2014) - (‘Parhelion’ sport) - Huge, (28” X 50”) After a small glitch in production this monster is back also. This new sport of ‘Parhelion’ has rich green leaves and an almost pure white margin. Save a large space for this dramatic hosta that is the pride and joy of Cindy Tomashek in Minnesota. **\$15**
- ‘Imperial Palace’** (D. & J. Ward 2009) - (‘Pin Stripe Sister’ X unknown) - Large, (26” X 48”) This hosta is a striking light yellow-centered, green-margined beauty that believe it or not is easy to grow. It makes a shining beacon in the garden if given some morning sun. I think this is one of Dick Ward’s best. **\$20**
- ♥ **‘Infatuation’** (Solberg 2014) - (49 Best X ‘Red October’) - Small, (10” X 20” or larger) This very special hosta resembles a bird in flight. It is a very waxy blue H. kikutii in form with rich cranberry colored petioles. The leaf margins gently undulate, effortlessly gliding on a warm summer breeze. It blooms in August with purple flowers on arching scapes. This seedling of mine is a great mix of the species H. longipes, H. kikutii, and H. pycnophylla. It demands attention and deserves a special spot in the garden or a ceramic container. Beautiful purple scapes produce seed pods easily. Great for hybridizing. It is love at first sight. \$25 ‘Jetstream’ (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - (Seedling of H. yingeri OP seedling) - Medium to Large, (26” X 40”) I am a sucker for a waxy blue hosta. I also like hostas



## GROWING HOSTA TO PERFECTION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

north so that it is at the greatest (90° angle) over the Tropic of Cancer (23.5° North Latitude). Believe it or not on that date the light intensity at the equator is about the same as Peoria, IL, and much less than in Raleigh and Atlanta. So as the equatorial sun beats down on Miami in June and much of the South has tropical light intensities, our hostas burn in a couple hours of mid-day sun unlike their cousins in Minneapolis which flourish.”

So you see, where you live on this planet matters. 30-50% shade cloth is appropriate north of I-80 and 60-70% south of I-40 with 50-60% in between in Indianapolis and St. Louis. Yes, hostas will grow very large leaves in very shady northern gardens but they would really like more light especially in early summer when they are still expanding.

Whereas trees may not be the most hosta friendly way to shade your hostas and shade structures are probably better suited to a commercial nursery, clouds can be your friends. Certain locales, along lakes, near the ocean, and in the mountains for example, may provide “natural shade” by clouding up in the afternoon on most summer days. Remember I am from Miami, there is a 30% chance of rain every afternoon during the summer there and the partly cloudy skies as well as the “sun showers” that develop do help to reduce the heat and provide shade. You cannot control the weather but you can take advantage of it.

I have mentioned soil once already but what is the perfect soil for hostas? Fortunately for us there is not one. Hostas, maybe because of their hybrid nature, are tolerant to a wide range of soils. They can function very well in a wide range of pH, probably a little below 5.0 and a little above 7.0 maybe more. They like soils that drain well, but like I above they can swim in a pond.

The best media for hostas however is no soil at all. Van Wade and I used to compare and contrast potting mixes. (That is what nursery folks talk about while riding on the golf cart.) He thought my mix of double shredded aged pine bark and granite fines was the best he had seen. So do I, I am not a fan of peat moss mixes although they are much lighter and good for producing hosta liners. I adjust the pH to 5.6 on my mix in case you were wondering. Organic mixes do have a shelf life, mine is about 2 years, then the bark decomposes into too small particles and the pH drops toward 4.0. Mineral soils might need some amending from time to time with organic matter, I use pine bark, imagine that, but soil does not decompose like bark.

So split the difference. Put up to 30% organic matter into your soil unless it naturally has a high organic matter content. Compost is great but use some pine bark if you can get it. It decomposes more slowly and the particle size is larger so that it provides more drainage. I used to add gravel mostly for the voles but I found that eventually the hosta out grew the gravel and the voles did not mind a bump on the nose every once in a while if

it meant having hosta for Christmas dinner.

Now here’s a question for you. How fertile is your garden soil? Hostas love nitrogen and need magnesium. Perfect soil for hostas has ample amounts of both. When is the last time you took a soil test? (When is the last time it was really useful?) People ask me, “What is the best fertilizer for hostas, which one is perfect?” You will not want to hear this but the best way to fertilize your hostas is to do it every time you water. That is what the big nurseries do.

The most effective way to make sure ample amounts of nitrogen and magnesium are available is to inject liquid fertilizer into your irrigation system. Every time you water, you feed, about 100 ppm of nitrogen. In a hand watering system this is very efficient but in the garden or even in my nursery with overhead watering, this can result in a lot of wasted fertilizer and thus added expense, not to mention pollution problems. So we use a granular slow release fertilizer (17-6-12) top dressed on our containerized hostas. When we water, fertilizer is released.

Slow release fertilizer works well in the garden also as do organic fertilizers, (you just need to use more because they have less nitrogen), and even good old 10-10-10 but you will need to reapply it at least once after 4-6 weeks. Supplementing granular fertilizers with a foliar feed, just getting the foliage wet, of a good liquid fertilizer with high nitrogen and magnesium two or three times during the growing season will maximize your hosta’s potential and mimic the continuous feed

of injection systems.

Finally, and most importantly, plant your hostas in good soil, the right mix of ample light and shade, water and fertilize them well and then leave them alone! Do not move them every year if they are not meeting your expectations, do not divide them every time they have more than two divisions. Let them grow in that perfect spot for at least 3 years. And then if they continue to increase in size and/or divisions each spring continue to leave them alone. Unless you are in the nursery business there is no need to divide a hosta ever as long as it is growing to its potential.

Yes, I said leave them alone! Dividing hostas is really kind of barbaric isn’t it? This is especially true of that huge clump that has taken 5 years to get to that size. So many people tell me the story of dividing their big hostas only to have them never be big again. If your hostas get too crowded, move the smaller ones away from the giants. It is less work anyway.

I have seen hostas grown to perfection in lots of sun in Minnesota and even Ohio. I have seen them grown equally well in open shade in Indiana. I have seen fabulous hostas in containers in Alabama and have grown more than a few in North Carolina in the garden and in the nursery. It is okay to pamper your hostas, overwatering them and serving them cocktails of vitamins and mycorrhizae. They love it and they will let you know. They also hope you misplace your favorite dividing knife so they can relax and reach their full potential, and perfection.

## SPRING 2018 COMPLETE RETAIL HOSTA LISTINGS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

that make perfect clumps, with all their leaves neatly arranged in just the right place. This medium-sized hosta, with the help of a little morning sun, is the perfect combination of both. A seedling of Doug Beilstein, plant this one next to ‘June’. **\$20**

♥ **‘Kaleidochrome’** (Q & Z Nursery) - (seedling from Japan, possibly *H. longipes* and *H. montana* parentage) - Small to Medium? (10” X 22”) The most exciting hosta that I have seen in years, this beauty is streaked bright yellow and green. My narrow leaves have widened the second year but the variegation is just as good. To my delight it is fertile and I am trying to imagine the wondrous seedlings that will soon appear in my seedling flats. It blooms here in June on tall straight scapes, almost *H. montana* like. **\$25**

♥ **‘Komodo Dragon’** (M. Seaver, C. Seaver 2004) - (‘Donahue Piecrust’ X unknown) - Huge, (30” X 84”) This classic huge green monster has personality. Its leaves reach out to passersby from their tall petioles possibly threatening small children. I like it because it is really big but also distinct. **\$20**

♥ **‘Leapin’ Lizard’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ([‘Splashed Leather’ X ‘Treasure Island’] open pollinated) - ( Medium, (12” X 30”)) This medium-sized hosta has it all. The attractive green leaves are highly ruffled, folded, and heavily puckered. Every leaf is a little different resulting in a wild and crazy hosta. This seedling of Doug Beilstein’s is not only a First Look winner but a sure show stopper in the garden. **\$30**

♥ **‘Mango Salsa’** (Solberg 2011) - (*H. clausa normalis* F2 seedling X ‘Strawberry Banana Smoothie’) - Medium, (12” X 20”) Maybe the best of this red seedling cross, this hosta is sun tolerant, has unusual wavy yellow leaves and red on both sides of the petiole into the leaf and red scapes. It has lavender flowers, maybe with a little red, and is a great breeding plant, fertile both ways. Light years away from its sibling ‘Smiley Face’, an equally stellar hosta. **\$20**

♥ **‘Megan’s Angel’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2009) - (Sport of streaked ‘Blue Angel’) - Huge, (22” X 54”) or larger) This one of Doug Beilstein’s is a sport of the classic ‘Blue Angel’, named for his daughter. The huge blue leaves emerge with this wide, soft yellow border that will become white by late summer. It grows well and has the same wonderful near white flower display as its parent. It will grow large enough to fill a whiskey barrel. **\$20**

♥ **‘Orange Marmalade’** <sup>PP167,742</sup> (Solberg 2002) - (Sport of ‘Paul’s Glory’) - Large, (18” X 42”) Breathtaking mound of heart-shaped blue leaves with a center that emerges bright yellow, then turns an orangish gold before becoming pale yellow or white depending on the amount of sun. Lavender flowers in July. Beautifully variegated all summer! Yes, it really looks orange-yellow or yellow-orange, like the Crayola crayons. **\$20**

♥ **‘Pea 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 surprise, surprise, near white fragrant flowers in July. It is sun tolerant and is the per-

fect replacement for a ‘Tokudama’ in southern gardens. **\$20**

♥ **‘Peach Salsa’** (Solberg 2013) - (*H. clausa normalis* F2 seedling X ‘Strawberry Banana Smoothie’) - Medium, (12” X 20”) This bright yellow hosta has puckered leaves that are almost translucent, it glows! It is also a showoff with its bright red, not purple, petioles and scapes. Don’t 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. **\$20**

♥ **‘Pebble Creek’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - (‘Lime Piecrust’ X ‘Blue Splendor’) - Large, (26” X 42”) Doug Beilstein loves yellow classic hostas, the cupping but mostly he loves the puckering. This large hosta combines both. It will take some strong light in Ohio and becomes brighter yellow as the summer progresses. Great as a background for smaller hostas. **\$20**

♥ **‘Petticoat Junction’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ([*H. nigrescens* X op seedling] X [‘Elvis Lives’ X ‘Salute’ seedling]) - Medium, (10” X 36”) Doug Beilstein is rapidly producing a fine group of highly ruffled blue hostas. A very waxy, broad leafed, medium-sized hosta, ‘Petticoat Junction’ has a lively appearance, with its tight ruffles and twisted leaf tips. I love this look. **\$20**

♥ **‘Plum Nutty’** (Solberg 2011) - (‘Candy Dish’ X [(*H. pycnophylla* 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 rippled but I really like it. It does have some purple on the petioles but is reluctant to set seed, (but does), for me since it flowers on nicely arching scapes in July here. You may have better luck. **\$20**

♥ **‘Razzmatazz’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - (‘Color Fantasy’ X ‘Potomac Pride’) - Medium, (17” X 36”) We do not think of hosta leaf engineering very often, but it is the structural design of this creamy white-margined hosta that grabs your attention. It has a dozen or so deeply impressed veins that not only give an overbuilt appearance but also help the leaf margin to ruffle. On any breeze the ruffles will cause the leaf to dance, form compelling function. Give it a try. **\$20**

♥ **‘Roberta’** (D. Chopko, B. Kuk 2008) - (‘Golden Delight’ sport) - Medium, (18” X 28”) Named for Daves’s wife and hosta superstar, Roberta Chopko this medium-sized, round-leaved hosta has the classic colors of ‘Frances Williams’, a rich golden margin and a blue leaf center. Great for smaller gardens. **\$15**

♥ **‘Rough Knight’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ([‘King of Spades’ op] open pollinated) - Small-Medium, (10” X 36”) - Doug Beilstein has a special place in his hosta heart for cupped hostas, so do I. This small blue-green beauty has very cupped leaves with perfect little rows of puckers. All the leaves appear to be emerging from a single point like a bouquet of foliage, to decorate the garden. Great in a pot, too. **\$15**

♥ **‘Smash Hit’** (M. Zilis) - (Sport of ‘Orange Marmalade’ <sup>PP#167,42</sup>) - Medium, (14” X 30”) This sport of

‘Orange Marmalade’ <sup>PP#167,42</sup> has a much wider blue-green margin than its parent indicating that it is probably tetraploid and will grow a little better. The leaf center is still bright yellow in the spring, turning orange, and then white as the season progresses. Certainly a winner. **\$20**

♥ **‘Sugar Plum’** (Solberg 2011) - (Seedling X ‘One Man’s Treasure’) - Medium, (20” X 28”) This is the one!!! The ultimate goal of breeding purple-petioled hostas is to produce an upright plant with rich regal purple color that runs up into the veins at the base of the leaf. Add a bright white back to the leaf and you have the perfection of the purple running all the way into the white. This is that dream plant. It has purple scapes as well and blooms in late August and September. It is a prolific seed producer. **\$25**

♥ **‘Stan the Man’** (B. Kuk ) - Medium, (17” X 34”) This beautiful medium to large hosta from the late Bob Kuk has an unusual wide two-tone margin, yellow on the edge and white next to the blue-green center. It has good vigor for having *H. sieboldiana* heritage. Named for his father. **\$15**

♥ **‘Tidewater’** (M. Zilis 2003) - (*H. kikutii leuconota* X ‘Elegans’) - Large , (18” X 40”) This is a cool hosta! It is a cross between a white backed *H. kikutii* and ‘Elegans’ by Mark Zilis. It is large and intensely blue but has long narrow leaves with lots of veins. It has lots of white wax and lots of character. You must have this one. **\$20**

♥ **‘Victory’** (M. Zilis, Solberg 2003) - (Sport of ‘Elatior’) - Huge, (36” X 84”) This is an awesome hosta, one of the best ever. Yes, this wide white-margined sport of ‘Elatior’ requires a substantial piece of garden real estate but its stately upright habit deserves a prominent spot. Don’t have room? It makes a great pot plant also. Hosta of the Year for 2015. **\$15**

♥ **‘Winter Frost’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ([(*H. nigrescens* X op seedling) X F2 seedling from ‘Ogon Tsumisha’ X *H. yingeri*)] - Medium, (17” X 36”) This heavily waxed blue beauty is the first of a group of wonderfully ruffled, very blue hostas from Doug Beilstein. As a young plant it looks strikingly different from other blue hostas and matures into an elegant medium-sized clump in the garden. Its frost lasts well into summer. **\$25**

♥ **‘World Cup’** (D. Beilstein & M. Zilis, M. Zilis 2006) - (‘Komodo Dragon’ X ‘Super Bowl’) - Large, (20” X 44”) This hosta is destined to find its way into the Top 25. 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 where ever you see it. Grows well in deep shade or cool sun. **\$25**

### Miniature and Small Hostas

♥ **‘Appletini’** (M. Zilis, M. Vanous 2009) - (Yellow sport of ‘Blue Dimples’ X ‘Shining Tot’) - Mini to Small, (6” X 14”) A great new mini, maybe the best of the “tini” series from Mark Zilis, it has the bright yellow color, the shine, good substance, and cute leaf shape to make this fast growing hosta a star in the garden or

in a container. It also has nice lavender flowers in July. **\$15**

♥ **‘Baby Blue Eyes’** (Solberg 2006) - (‘Cody’ X ‘Dorset Blue’) - Mini-Small, (6” X 16”) This little hosta is a darling. It is a very cute tight, flat mound of heart-shaped pretty blue leaves that grows fast. Not too big for a large trough, it is also tough enough to show off in the garden. Light lavender flowers on short scapes in July. **\$15**

♥ **‘Baby Booties’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2012) - (‘Swoosh’ X *H. capitata* F2 seedling) - Mini, (7” X 12”) I have been very impressed with this great, true miniature hosta. Its leaves have a very showy white margin and a cute rounded shape. It is a seedling of Doug Beilstein’s, a F2 cross of ‘Swoosh’ and *H. capitata*. It also grows very well in the nursery. **\$15**

♥ **‘Bachelor Party’** (M. Zilis, T. Toman, M. Zilis & J. Schwartz 2011) - (‘Bridegroom’ sport) - Small, (12” X 20”) This is a “one of kind” hosta with heart-shaped green leaves bordered in bright white, dramatically twisted on very upright petioles. It is very cool, but what do you do with it? It is perfect in a container with a couple of other mini mounds. **\$15**

♥ **‘Brentwood Blues’** (S. Watson 2013) - (Sport of ‘Rhythm and Blues’) - Small, (8” X 20”) This little hosta is a wonderful sport of ‘Rhythm and Blues’ from Steve Watson of Brentwood, Tennessee. It has bright white margins on blue-green leaves with well-proportioned flowers. It has a rare combination of colors. **\$15**

NEW ♥ **‘Cricket’** (D. & J. Ward 2010) - (‘Jiminy Cricket’ sport) - Mini, (4” X 14”) This little hosta has small green, highly ruffled leaves with good substance. It grows fast and makes a great garden plant for your mini bed or the front of the border. We all need a few green guys to show off the others. **\$20**

♥ **‘Coconut Custard’** (Solberg 2007) - ([‘Blue Cadet’ X ‘One Man’s Treasure’] X o.p.) - Mini, (5” X 12”) This fast growing mini with heart-shaped leaves is bright waxy yellow in the spring with purple petioles. It has good substance and makes a very sturdy plant. A highlight of the spring season. **\$15**

♥ **‘Cookie Crumbs’** (Solberg, M. Zilis 2002) - (Sport of ‘Tiny Tears’) - Mini, (5” X 10”) Finally a clean white-margined mini reminiscent of *H. venusta*. This very flat mound of green heart-shaped leaves has a surprisingly wide white margin. It has. purple flowers in June. **\$20**

♥ **‘Cracker Crumbs’** (Solberg 2002) - (Sport of ‘Shiny Penny’) - Mini, (6” X 12”) The miniature bright gold leaves have a shiny, dark green margin that appears hand painted. Good substance, growth rate and lavender flowers in July. It is perfect for troughs. **\$15**

♥ **‘Crumb Cake’** (Solberg 2008) - (‘Cinnamon Sticks’ X ‘Cracker Crumbs’) - Small, (4” X 12”) This



WHAT HOSTAS HAVE TAUGHT US: PART 1  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Walters Gardens’ hosta was given a new name, ‘September Surprise’, the surprise being that it was not ‘September Sun’. And that is one of the ways that hostas taught us that all sports are different. It is also one of the ways they like to bring a little ciaos into our perfectly ordered view of them as dependable, well-mannered plants. Now every hosta sport is considered unique and allowed to have its own name. Yes, this means that there are dozens of look-alike sports from the same parent floating around in the trade, maddening many a collector, but that is the way hostas want it and we just have to get over ourselves.

Some hostas have produced huge families of sports. Once that Pandora’s Box was open the tricks that hostas can do seems endless. In the next several articles I will examine many of these extended hosta sport families and discuss the lessons learned in each case.

To me ‘Fragrant Bouquet’ while quite popular for a time, even the AHGA Hosta of the Year exactly 20 years ago, was never a very exciting hosta. I think it was the yellowish color or maybe that it was that it was registered as a streaked hosta that never made it to my garden with that coloration. It was unique because it was yellow with white variegation and eventually formed a border, so it was a true Benedict Cross plant and also yellow with the potential to become green. Two tricks were in play at the same time.

My involvement with the family began with ‘Guacamole’ a tissue culture sport of ‘Fragrant Bouquet’. It has a green margin and a gold center and like ‘Frances Williams’ produced lots of green and gold off types, not unexpectedly. To encourage other labs to produce my plant, not that royalties were involved just brand recognition, I named the two solid forms ‘Fried Green Tomatoes’ and ‘Fried Bananas’ to help their bottom line.

rapidly growing hosta makes a very tight flat mound of honey-gold round leaves with mahogany petioles that are shiny, wonderfully wavy, and have very good substance. Its mahogany scapes have pretty lavender flowers in July. It is a cute little hosta tough enough for the garden but deserving of a very special spot. I just love it!   **\$15**

♥ **‘Curly Fries’** (Solberg 2008) - (‘Pineapple Upsidedown Cake’ seedling) - Small, (5” X 16”) Just look at a photo. I will add that the agave-looking leaves are stiff as a board and you can see that our award winning ‘Curly Fries’ is the most unique hosta to be introduced in some time. Best grown in half a day of sun, its highly ruffled narrow leaves emerge yellow and then fade to near white. The scape is deep purple, topped with lavender flowers. It makes a great container plant or grows very well in the garden. You just have to touch it.   **\$20**

**‘Dragon Tails’** (W. Zumbar) - Mini, (5” X 8”) This bright yellow mini is best grown in a little strong light to accentuate the tight rippling along the narrow leaf margins but too much will bleach it white. It makes a cute little tuft of foliage with pale purple flowers in July. It reblooms here for me on a second flush of summer foliage.   **\$15**

♥ **‘Fairy Dust’** (Solberg 2017) - (‘Corkscrew’ X ‘Green Eyes’ F2) - Mini, (5” X 8”) I am very excited about my intensely yellow little mini ‘Fairy Dust’, a second generation seedling from ‘Corkscrew’ and ‘Green Eyes’. Its narrow upright leaves sparkle brightly all summer and it has good substance, too. This one makes sparks fly!   **\$35**

**‘Fruit Cup’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ([[‘Minuta’ F1 seedling B X ‘Shining Tot’) X (‘Lakeside Looking Glass op.)]) - Small, (8” X 13”) This almost mini has very round dark green leaves that amazingly are cupped and puckered. It grows pretty fast, too. A great container and garden plant.   **\$25**

**‘Giantland Mouse Cheese’** (J. Miller & T. Meyer, M. Zilis 2011) - (‘Blue Mouse Ears’ X unknown) - Mini (4” X 12”) We all know that mice like cheese, so here is a cheddar colored ‘Blue Mouse Ears’ seedling from Jeff Miller and Terry Meyer for your “Mouse Nest”. It has the same good substance and cute round leaves as its parent and is bright yellow in the spring and a little greener in the summer.   **\$15**

**‘Holy Mouse Ears’** (M. Zilis, E. & J. Deckert 2006) - (‘Royal Mouse Ears’ sport) - Small, (6” X 16”) Of all the ‘Blue Mouse Ears’ forms, this one is my favorite. The cute round leaves have a blue margin and an unique bluish yellow center that becomes creamy white in part sun. Lavender flowers top its short, stocky scapes in June. It is the baby of the family.   **\$15**

**‘Itsy Bitsy Spider’** (G. Johnson) - (‘Hadspen Heron’ seedling) - Mini, (2.5” X 6”) This hosta has a flat spider-like habit, short, narrow leaves with surprising sub-

Being fragrant-flowered and rapidly growing, sun tolerant hostas, all three were and still are grown widely throughout the trade worldwide.

And then Han Hansen and Shady Oaks Nursery found ‘Stained Glass’. This was a sport outside the Benedict Cross where the gold center of ‘Guacamole’ became a beautiful, bright yellow. Our understanding of hosta genetics did not explain how such a mutation can occur, remember we are dealing with a single nuclear gene here, and really still doesn’t. I told you hostas were smarted than we are. ‘Stained Glass’ has become one of the finest hostas anywhere and while it might not have quite as much vigor as ‘Guacamole’ because of its lighter leaf center, it still has more than enough to be a great garden plant.

Those white chloroplasts from the border of ‘Fragrant Bouquet’ would show up again in ‘Frozen Margarita’ a sport of mine from ‘Fried Bananas’, or some new ones may have mutated. They were pure white and formed a narrow white border mimicking the salted rim of a margarita glass. This was not too surprising but when tissue culture began to produce a wider margin plant that was yellow before turning white, I realized that something new was going on.

Yes, it was a different type of variegation. Human selection in the lab, the wider margin was easier to see and cull, had pushed the cultivar in a new direction. You might think this is cool, a better plant from the lab, but as a nurseryman I want consistency, so I let others deal with this issue and stopped growing the plant. It is still however being sold today in wholesale quantities. Which is in your garden?

Like I said I am very impressed with hostas and the tricks they have taught us so I try in return to impress my hostas by giving them clever names. The whole food name thing really got out of control with this sport family of hostas beginning with ‘Guacamole’, ‘Fried Bananas’ and ‘Fried Green Tomatoes’. The Mexican food theme was carried by many others all the way to ‘Salsa’, ‘Quesadilla’, and ‘Mariachi’. What seemed

even decided to bloom in August despite the horrible weather. It is fast growing and an excellent mini to add to your collection. Everybody needs a little green.   **\$15**

**‘Limey Lisa’** (W. Zumbar, K. Walek AHS (R) 2009) - Mini, (6” X 21”) This little hosta has unique limey green leaves, brighter in spring, that are round and deeply cupped for their size. It is very vigorous and makes a great garden plant, useful as a groundcover or from of the bed specimen. It has purple flowers in July.   **\$15**

**‘Mouse Trap’** (Shady Oaks Nursery) - (‘Blue Mouse Ears’ sport) - Mini, (6” X 14”) Best growing of the white-centered sports of ‘Blue Mouse Ears’, ‘Mouse Trap’ emerges with a pure white center with a few scattered green flecks. Summer leaves may green up in extreme heat so there is never any melting out! Lavender flowers on cute white scapes in June. It is the centerpiece of your hosta “mouse” collection.   **\$25**

♥ **‘Shiny Penny’** (Solberg 1997) – (‘Lemon Lime’ X ‘Shining Tot’) – Mini, (5” X 12”) This true mini has bright yellow teardrop-shaped leaves on a flat mound that contrasts well with other narrow-leafed minis. Nice proportioned purple flowers in July.   **\$15**

**‘Surfer Girl’** (C. Wasitis, Bridgewood Gardens 2000) - (Seedling of unknown parentage) - Mini, (4” X 12”) This cute little green hosta has very wavy, surfboard shaped leaves. It makes a tight clump, and is easy to grow in a container. It has purple flowers in July. Give it a try.   **\$15**

**‘Tears of Joy’** (P. Black & T. Johnson, Sebright Gardens 2005) - (Sport of ‘Tiny Tears’) - Mini, (4” X 13”) This little H. venusta like mini has green leaves that are folded and twisted when they emerge. It is a fast grower and spreader, perfect for covering a container or trough. The flowers appear to be yellow, lots of pollen but no petals. It is different.   **\$15**

♥ **‘Twist Tie’** (Solberg 2017) - (‘Tongue Twister’ X [‘Iwa’ X ‘Blue Blush’]) - Small, (10” X 18”) ‘Twist Tie’ is a small blue-green hosta with very upright twisted leaves. It is from ‘Tongue Twister’ and like it has very good substance and is one of the last hostas to go to sleep. Twisted hostas are my new passion, wait to you see what comes next.   **\$25**

**‘Urchin’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ([‘Candy Dish’ X (*H. pycnophylla* X ‘Harvest Dandy’) X ‘Raspberry Sorbet’] X ‘Atom Smasher’ op.) - Mini, (8” X 13”) This unique little hosta has leaves with lots of ruffles that appear to have points at their ends. The green leaves stick up from the clump like spines, urchin spines. The scapes and seed pods are dark purple. Another winner from Doug Beilstein.   **\$15**

**‘Wonderful’** (R. Goodwin 2005) - (‘Little Wonder’ seedling) - Mini, (3” X 6”) This tiny hosta has teardrop-shaped yellow leaves that form a very cute

to be just a little harmless fun became the impetus for hosta collectors to establish food or kitchen gardens of hostas based only on their names. The hosta name became more important than the plant itself. The trend has caught on and now all kinds of plants are given food names, crazy humans.

Just when you thought that you had seen it all, hostas taught us a new and even better trick. They could double their chromosomes in tissue culture becoming tetraploid. Along came wide-margined ‘Avocado’ and then ‘Holy Mole’ both tetraploid forms of ‘Guacamole’ from different labs and they looked a little different too, the color is better in the latter. Unfortunately the ploidy of ‘Holy Mole’ has not been tested but ‘Avocado’ has a tetraploid green leaf margin and a diploid gold leaf center, almost two plants in one. Of course when placed in tissue culture a green and a gold off type was produced. The green plant, ‘Mojito’ is totally tetraploid, with more substance and larger flowers, and the gold plant ‘Cerveza’ is a diploid plant that resembles but is not quite the same as ‘Fried Bananas’.

Hans Hansen then showed hostas that he had some tricks of his own up his sleeves and in tissue culture chemically induced ‘Stained Glass’ to become ‘Cathedral Windows’ a tetraploid plant, at least in its dark green margin. (It to unfortunately has not been tested.) It too has produced green off types that appear to be tetraploid but again slightly different from ‘Mojito’. The yellow sport was named ‘The Shining’ and appears to be similar but not quite the same as ‘Tortilla Chip’, the diploid yellow sport from ‘Stained Glass’.

Pretty amazing, huh? Back in the 80’s we would have never guessed that hostas could be so complicated. And this is just the beginning as you will read. Yes, hostas are beautiful plants and they calm our spirits as they bask in the summer garden, but for me they are intellectually interesting, too. I really do think they are smarter than me, but I am trying to catch up.

**Next time: *The wacky world of ‘Sum and Substance.’***

SPRING 2018 COMPLETE RETAIL HOSTA LISTINGS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

delicate miniature mound. Hybridized by Randy Goodwin, it is a perfect container hosta or grow it as Randy does in a special bed just for minis along a walk.   **\$15**

Closeout Specials!!!  
Two for \$25 mix and match!

**‘Bedazzled’** (D. Dean 1999) – (‘Little Wonder’ X ‘Love Pat’) – Small, (7” X 21”) This small hosta has a blue-green leaves with a yellow margin that really catches the eye. I like it very much with minis in a container.   **Two for \$25**

**‘Class Act’** (M. Zilis) – (‘Paul’s Glory’ X H. yingeri) – Medium, (16” X 30”) The blue heart-shaped leaves of this hosta have a nice yellow margin and a little undulation and maybe a little twist. Makes a good landscape addition.   **Two for \$25**

**‘Memphis Blue’** (Olga Petryszyn) – (‘Sagae’ X ‘Tokudama Aureomarginata’) - Large, (29” X 40”) Large blue rounded leaves make an classic somewhat upright mound of impressive puckered foliage.   **Two for \$25**

**‘Moonrise’** (D. & J. Ward) – (‘Dorothy Benedict’ X unknown) – Medium to Large, (20” X 36”) This hosta has almost round green leaves that are bordered in light gold tones.   **Two for \$25**

**‘Pie a la Mode’** (M. Zilis, M. Vanous 2010) – (‘Color a la Mode’ sport) – Large, (20” X 45”) Large heart-shaped leaves are blue-green with a gold border that becomes white in a sunny location. Grows well and makes a statement.   **Two for \$25**

**‘Yesterday’s Memories’** (H. Hansen, Shady Oaks Nursery 2005) – (‘Squash Casserole’ sport) – Large, (20” X 48”) This hosta makes a large somewhat flat mound of yellow highly ruffled leaves with a green margin. Rapid grower.   **Two for \$25**

**‘Yosemite Valley’** (Olga Petryszyn, C. Wilhoite 2010) – ([‘Elatior’ X ‘High Noon’] X ‘Niagara Falls’) – Large, (33” X 50”) This hosta makes an upright clump of yellow long pointed yellow leaves that are nicely ruffled. Good substance, makes an impressive specimen.   **Two for \$25**

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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 re-fund 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.

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For more information visit:  
<http://www.lewisginter.org/>

**Dixie Regional  
May 31-June 2**  
in Clarksville, TN

For more information visit:  
[http://www.DixieHosta.net/  
regional-convention/](http://www.DixieHosta.net/regional-convention/)

**American Hosta  
Society Convention  
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For more information visit:  
[www.ahs2018philly.org](http://www.ahs2018philly.org)

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## ORDER FORM

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**SATISFACTION GUARANTEE:**  
All hostas are guaranteed to be true to name and certified pest free. If for any reason you are not completely satisfied with your hosta order just return the plants by UPS within 5 (five) days of receipt and the hostas will be replaced or your pay-ment refunded. But please call us first and let us know of any problems. Thanks, Bob.

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ Desired Shipping Date \_\_\_\_\_

VISA/ MC # \_\_\_\_\_  
3 Digit Sec. Code \_\_\_\_\_ Exp.date \_\_\_\_\_

Quantity	Hosta Name	Price	
REGULAR UPS SHIPPING or		15.00	
USPS PRIORITY MAIL (west of Rockies)		25.00	
TOTAL			

## Come Visit Us ...

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 13-14, April 20-21, April 27-28, May 11-12, May 18-19 from 9:00 to 5:00. We will also have our annual Memorial Day Festival, Monday, May 28<sup>th</sup>. (Please note that we will be open on Monday only of that weekend this year.) We will also be open Saturday August 11<sup>th</sup> for our “Lucky 13 Sale”, all hostas \$13.00!!! 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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Our eight page newsletter printed twice a year  
One year \$10.00 | Three years \$25.00



# The local gossip 2018



Hosta 'Tom Terrific'

**‘First Blush’<sup>PP28920</sup> has its number.**

On January 30, 2018 my patent for *Hosta* ‘First Blush’<sup>PP28920</sup> was issued by the US Patent Office. It is number 28,920, yes there are now nearly 29,000 plants, not just hostas, which have been patented. To say the least I am very excited to get this accomplished and add another piece to my retirement pie.

First, in case you have never seen what they send you, it is a little booklet that looks very official. It even has the official Patent Office gold seal with red ribbons. Inside is all the paperwork you sent them including the photos all presented in the style a scientific paper. It even had a bar code! I think I might frame it.

So, now that I have it, what good is to me? How is it going to pay for my old folk’s home at the beach? Simply, it says in big print on the booklet cover right next to the gold seal:

“Therefore, this United States Patent grants to the person(s) having title to this patent the right to exclude others from asexually reproducing the plant and from using, offering for sale, or selling the plant so produced or any of its parts, throughout the United States of America or from importing the asexually reproduced plant, or any parts thereof, into the United States of America for the term set forth in 35 U.S.C. 154(a)(2) or (c)(1).”

Two things are important here. First is asexual reproduction. Asexual reproduction of the plant, by division, tissue culture, bud cuttings, or anything else is controlled by the patent holder. Thus no one can divide ‘First Blush’<sup>PP28920</sup> without my permission. Yes, even in your own garden, and even if you give it away. No asexual reproduction. I know that sounds harsh.

The second and maybe more important part is that the patent grants the patent holder the “right to exclude others from asexually reproducing the plant...” The patent holder must act! The US Government will not police your patent, the FBI will not get involved, you have to police your own patent. You have to do the excluding and you can choose how you want to do that but if you do not police your patent at all then it loses its power.

As most of you know I have been down this road before

with ‘Orange Marmalade’ PP16742 and have had to make sure that the plants brought into this country have come from the right sources. This not only protects my interests but also the interests of the nursery or nurseries that I license, maintaining their exclusivity. The nursery world is all one big network and everyone is one or at most two degrees removed from everyone else. That makes it somewhat easier to police a patent since the nurseries you license will help you.

So if a patent protects the rights of the holder to manage the distribution of his or her hosta, what does it not do? It only controls the first time the plant is sold. Sometimes the tissue culture labs write the check for the royalties, sometimes it is the wholesaler, almost never is it a retailer although the customer usually pays for it in the increased price of the plant but not always, discount pricing being what it is today. The patent holder gets paid by the production he or she controls directly. Also, the patent is only for plants produced or imported into the USA no other countries.

A patent does not cover sexual reproduction, using pollen or setting seed. A separate patent is needed for that. It does not cover hosta sports. They are fair game, have at it. It does not control marketing programs in which the patented plant may be placed and trademarks attached. Hopefully, however through interaction with the licensed nurseries some input can be made into the marketing end of things.

So please respect people’s patents even if the risk of getting a cease and desist letter from an attorney is a longshot. Remember, for some of us these pennies on the dollar will be buying the margaritas in our retirement somewhere warm.

**‘World Cup’ 2018 AHGA Hosta of the Year**

‘World Cup’ is the 2018 American Hosta Growers Association Hosta of the Year. Selected by AHGA members, this honor stamps ‘World Cup’ not only as a unique and beautiful hosta but also one that is a sturdy garden plant that is easy to grow. You may have heard this story before but it is worth repeating.

‘World Cup’ was hybridized by Doug Beilstein, a cross of ‘Komodo Dragon’ and ‘Super Bowl’. It gets its very upright habit from its mom and its yellow color and deep cupping from its dad. Doug planted it as a young seedling in the shade of trees at his old blueberry farm. In that crowded seedling row, overwhelmed by other faster growing hostas it sat unnoticed and unremarkable.

At the AHS auction that year Doug offered 20 seedlings from that patch for auction with the bid winner being able to choose what 20 plants he wanted from the entire group. Mark Zilis and C.H. Falstad III bid furiously against each other for the opportunity to choose the seedlings and finally the bidding was stopped and each one offered a chance to select 20 plants at the current bid. It was agreed and the next morning Mark went to select his favorites.

As he walked down the rows and rows of seedlings a small yellow hosta caught his eye for some reason. It in no way resembled the mature plant we know today but Mark thought the cross might produce an interesting plant. He then tissue cultured it in his lab and offered it for sale, naming it for the world soccer event that was currently being held. While it did show some cupping at that point, it had not reached its final glory even then.

Sometimes you never know, if that little yellow hosta had not somehow spoken to Mark that morning it would have probably found the compost pile. The moral of the story for hybridizers is to be patient with your seedlings and let them grow into what they will become. Don’t waste a great cross, ruthless early culling may result in some of your best work being thrown away.

**The King’s hostas**

Last October, my three Solberg kids and I traveled back in time to Norway to see the family farm from which we got our last name. Yes, Solberg was one of the largest farms in Norway and its farmhouse built in about 1750 is still inhabited by cousins of mine. It was all very cool!

We flew into Oslo, the capital, about 3 hours east by car and spent a day or two seeing the waterfront there as well as the Viking Ship Museum. October is not the best time to look for hostas anywhere and while they had not had a freeze yet the hostas had turned yellow with the fall leaves but were still barely recognizable.

The King of Norway has an impressive palace in Oslo with a long maybe quarter mile driveway leading up to a circle at the front of the building. To my surprise and delight this drive is bordered by trees with hostas in front of them for a city block or two. There were a few new additions that looked to be some “Tardiana”, maybe ‘Halcyon’ but most all of the border was large clumps of ‘Frances Williams’. The King of Norway has enough ‘Frances Williams’ to go into the nursery business and maybe rival the Dutch ☺.

**Club Specials:**

Well, this year we still do not have a Hosta Club Exclusive Hosta, sorry. Marketing is a crazy world and I admit I could be better at it but the truth is that we still are short on new hostas. I hope to bring it back next year.

This year I am trying to meet you half way however. We have two of our newest hostas, ‘Lemon Kiss’ and ‘Tom Terrific’ priced below wholesale for hosta clubs only. The club list is back and posted on the website, [www.HostaHosta.com](http://www.HostaHosta.com), under the “Hostas for Clubs” tab. Please check it out and give me a call if you have any questions.

‘Lemon Kiss’ is almost a mini with bright yellow round leaves with good substance and deep red on both sides of the petioles. It is a perfect little container hosta for shade that will dazzle you with red leaf tips as it emerges in the spring. ‘Tom Terrific’ is a large yellow hosta with round, puckered leaves that have rich purple petioles. Everyone who visits the nursery wants one. It is named for my good friend and former AHS President, Tom Micheletti.

**Lucky \$13 Sale a great success, let’s do it again!**

It was a crazy day for sure. I already have people calling wondering if I have lost my sanity and am having the Lucky \$13 sale again. Why not? I love the idea of all my hostas being the same low price for just one day of the year. Yes, all the hostas that are ready to sell in the nursery, not the newly potted little babies, but all the hostas even the \$50 dollar ones are just one low price, \$13.00 each.

The rules are the same as last year:

All hostas with a name sign in the block are \$13.00 each. No limit! This price is for one day only, Saturday, August 11, 2018, 9-5:00 at the nursery only, rain or shine.

We will supply labels and markers but you make your own labels. We will bag your hostas for you. Cash, check, and Visa, MasterCard, and Discover accepted.

You do not have to be present to participate, just send a friend to the nursery on August 11th with your want list. Make sure they are willing to deliver because we cannot ship hostas bought at this sale.

So come early and stay late, I will have some drinks and goodies for you and I guarantee you a fun time!!! **Hostas are supposed to be fun!**™



Hosta 'Lemon Kiss'



Solberg Farm, Norway

## Want More “Gossip?”

You can now subscribe to the “Gossip Jr.”. Published twice a year in August and November our black and white newsletter of eight letter sized pages will feature articles about hosta science and philosophy, gardening tips and other hosta thoughts that wander through Bob Solberg’s mind throughout the growing season. Less than one column of space will be reserved for commercial messages for Green Hill Farm so there will be much more hosta information than advertising. Cost is \$10.00 per year or

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With your subscription you will also receive a complimentary copy of “The Green Hill Gossip”, our color catalogue and newspaper. You can use our Order Form on the website or if you want just send us your name, address, and check to Green Hill Farm, PO Box 773, Franklinton, NC 27525. And feel free to call, 919-309-0649.

Just one more way to have Great Hosta Fun!



Hosta 'Twist Tie'

1 year subscription to “Gossip Jr.” - \$10.00,  
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