



The American Hosta Society

October 2023

eNewsletter



H. 'Made You Look'

S. Asch 2000

(Photo by Mary Vertz)

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President's Message

Amy Peterson, Oakdale, MN

What is your favorite season? Mine is fall and the vibrant transition of color the trees display as well as cooler weather. The hosta garden also has obvious changes, leaves turning gold to brown, fewer flowers and more seed pods setting for the future. I'm not a hybridizer and I admire those who do as they create our future choices. As of September 2023 the AHS Registrar has processed 85 new hosta registrations with more expected in the last quarter of 2023. Last fall I did collect seed pods in response to my local hosta society challenge to collect, start and then share what grew at our April general meeting. I admit to collecting but never planting due to problem with my arm injury, but a handful of others did meet the challenge and I plan to start seeds in 2024. Some of our participants made formal crosses, hybridized, while other reaped nature's choices. The display in April was interesting as a full range of leaf color was observed. Yes there were many just "green" ones predominating but there were also some with distinction. Those that participated shared their babies and I would say all enjoyed the event that April. Many of our hosta vendor's websites contain information on collecting seed pods and starting seeds. The AHS website under the Education tab and file "Hybridizing Part 1 and 2" also has how to information. You may want to give it a try this year as the time is right to collect seed pods for starting early next year. Local hosta societies are often looking for activities that membership can enjoy so maybe a seed starting challenge would be such an activity to try. As trying new things can be fun even if only done once.

The new AHS board of directors will be meeting in October and reviewing our activities, established and new for 2024 along with a budget and status reports. We hope to bring you activities that help sustain and grow your interest in hosta as well as grow the society. While we can put our best efforts forward for you all, your ongoing participation is also required. Please continue your active participation in reading the periodic AHS publications, go online to see what's new as the updated website should be released in the near future. Attend not only your local society meetings but attend a regional event and the national convention and renewing your AHS membership as well as encouraging others to join. In 2023 we had 102 new AHS members – **hurrah!** Other opportunities include volunteering for leadership roles, writing articles, taking photographs, entering leaves in a hosta shows, becoming a show judge, hosting a garden tour, etc. No one person can do it all but collectively we can sustain and grow both the local and national hosta society. My challenge to you for 2024 is to step up and out of your comfort zone and be as active as you can in sharing your time and talents. Make 2024 your season of change!

Amy Peterson, AHS President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Peterson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



Hostas and Associates

Glenn Herold, Cedarburg, WI

Masterwort is a Star in the Shade Garden

Photos by Glenn Herold

What are your favorite perennials for a shade garden? Hostas, ferns, astilbe, and lungwort come to mind. How about masterwort, known botanically as *Astrantia*? It might not be at the top of your list but mixes well with all of the above, for it, too, thrives on shady sites with even soil moisture.

Astrantia, consisting of eight to ten species, is a member of the carrot family, or Apiaceae. It is native to Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe and the Caucasus, a region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Though I find its foliage very attractive, it is best known for its white to pink flower clusters, which are surrounded by a collar of straw-like bracts. Beginning in late spring, the one-inch clusters open and the colorful bracts are effective through fall. The genus, *Astrantia*, is derived from the Latin word “aster,” meaning star, a reference to the star-like appearance of the flowers. They are faintly fragrant and make an excellent, long-lasting cut flower. It is an exceptional perennial alternative to the annual flower known as strawflower, which is in the aster family and has the botanical name *Xerochrysum bracteatum*.



Astrantia major Masterpiece foliage



Astrantia major Masterpiece flowers

The two species most often found in the nursery trade are *Astrantia major*, the great masterwort, and *Astrantia maxima*, which has the common name largest masterwort. Both top out at two to three feet, so I find the common names rather confusing. All the more reason to use botanical names! *Astrantia maxima* has larger flowers that are held far above the three to five lobed leaves that are at the base of the plant. It is not as vigorous a grower as *Astrantia major*.

Most of the cultivars that are readily available are of the species *Astrantia major*. The leaves are deeply cut and three to seven lobed. It spreads by lateral stems called stolons, but not to the point of becoming invasive or weedy. I have not yet had to rein in any of the six cultivars that I currently grow. Flower color ranges from greenish-white to deep pink, the color that dominates most of the cultivars. Propagation is by division of the clump in autumn or early spring. It may also self-seed, though I have not yet seen this happen in my garden.

‘Roma’ has rose-pink florets in the center of the flower surrounded by silver-pink bracts.



Astrantia major Roma flowers (spring)

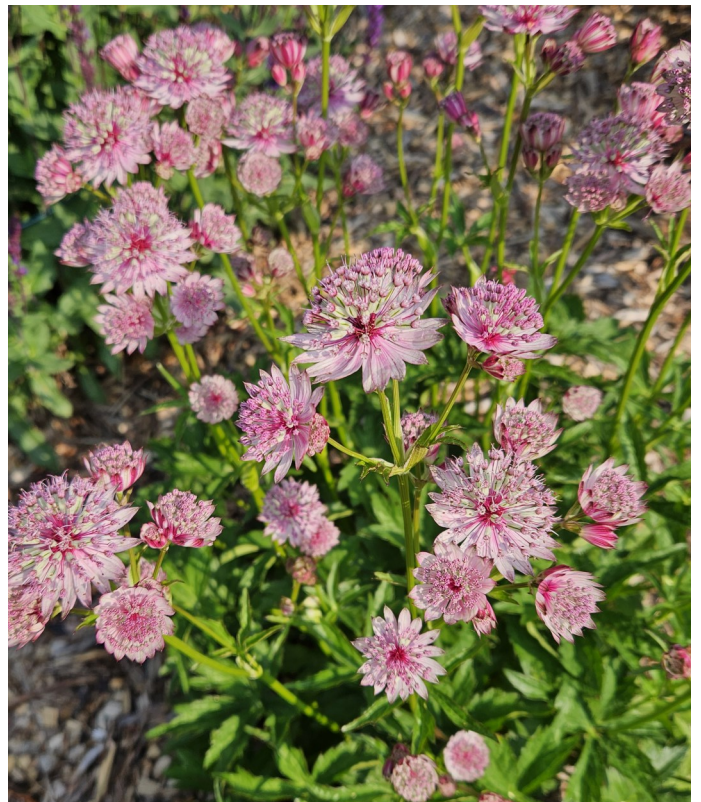


Astrantia major Roma

‘Ruby Cloud’ has red florets with greenish or pinkish bracts. ‘Star of Fire’ has pink bracts tipped with black. The stems have an attractive contrasting dark color. ‘Sparkling Stars Pink,’ perhaps my favorite, has pink and cream flowers.



Astrantia major Star of Fire flowers



Astrantia major Sparkling Stars Pink

Two of my plants have variegated leaves: ‘Masterpiece’ has deep green leaves with a gold center. Flowers are pink. ‘Vanilla Gorilla’ is the more striking of the two with green and white leaves and pink flowers. As expected, because of less chlorophyll in the leaves, the plant is not as vigorous as my other cultivars.



Astrantia major Vanilla Gorilla flowers



Astrantia major Vanilla Gorilla foliage

When planting *Astrantia*, mix organic matter into the soil to help retain moisture, for it is not drought tolerant. Through the summer, if you see the plant becoming limp, give it a drink of water. Siting the plant where it receives morning sun or dappled shade is best, though it will tolerate full sun if kept moist. Besides being useful in the shade garden, *Astrantia* can also be used at the edge of a bog garden. It is deer and pest resistant. Past uses included those that are medicinal, as the word ‘wort’ in the common name implies. It was used for relief of muscle cramps, stomach disorders, digestive problems, and other intestinal maladies.

It’s easy to fall in love with and get hooked on *Astrantia*. Though it may not be the first plant you use to co-star with your hostas, you will soon discover that it is more than an extra on the set.

Additional articles on plants and gardening can be found on my blog:
<https://TheCottageGardener53012.Wordpress.com>



GO HOSTAS!

Warren I. Pollock, Glen Mills, PA

GO HOSTAS!

Land of the Giants Hosta Farm - a new beginning

Reprinted with permission of Milan and Dana Zubrik, Eurohosta, Slovakia



JEFF MILLER
Founder of the company
Land of the Giants Hosta Farm

Land of the Giants Hosta Farm is a family-owned and operated business located in Milton, Wisconsin, US, specializing in growing and selling hostas. Established in 2007, it has become one of the largest hosta nurseries in the Midwest.



Land of the Giants Hosta Farm was established by **Jeff Miller**. Ashley Moscoso said: “My father has never done anything small”. Jeff was known for doing things big and hostas were not an exception... Jeff and his wife Penny started planting hostas around his house as a hobby. Their interest in hostas grew and soon they turned his hobby into a business. The business grew until an estimated 450,000 hostas filled all planting area around the house. Jeff’s huge hosta plants and his amazing, award-winning cultivars, were known countrywide and were very demanded by any hosta lover in US. As Jeff was known for doing things big, he was also enthusiastic about giant sized hostas and he introduced several gigantic cultivars as a part of his “Giantland” series.

Under Jeff’s leadership, Land of the Giants earned a reputation for producing high-quality, healthy hostas that were well-suited to the local climate. The farm’s commitment to sustainable growing practices and customer service helped make it a popular destination for gardeners across the

country. Jeff was also a respected member of the gardening community. He was a valued member and past president of the Wisconsin Hosta Society. He wrote articles for various gardening magazines and gave presentations at gardening conferences and events.

In late 2021, Jeff passed away suddenly after a short and serious illness, and nine days later, his wife Penny lost her battle with Huntington's disease. Ashley, her brother Andrew, and their entire family were devastated.

However, Ashley and her husband Pedro Moscoso decided to continue Jeff's legacy and bring the farm into the future. Ashley said, "People love my father's cultivars, and it is a great honor for me to be able to continue to offer them to hosta lovers" and she continued: "Like so many of the new hosta varieties Jeff introduced over the years, he was truly one of a kind. I lost two of my most beloved people during a few days. However, just as one season follows another, a new spring is arriving and bringing with it a time for new beginnings. In that spirit, I am stepping up to continue the business and honor my Father's legacy along with my partner, Pedro".

Ashley is preparing a new system for managing orders and plant inventory, which is crucial for online orders to work efficiently. Jeff knew immediately where each cultivar was situated in the garden and how much of it there was, but now Ashley needs to establish a new plant registration system and a new system of plant location in the garden. A new webpage is also in the works, and Ashley has already started scheduling open houses, similar to past years. She would also like to continue the tradition of hosta breeding... There are still so many things for Ashley to learn and to do...

"It is so exciting to see dad's and Penny's plants in the gardens around the country and even around the world". People send her pictures of hostas that they bought in the past from Land of Giant Hosta Farm.

When you start a business, one thing is crucial - friends. There are many friends around Ashley. They believed in Jeff and now they believe in Ashley. Pedro is doing a lot of outdoor work and Ashley focuses on customer service—for example managing orders, communication with customers and related issues.

Let's mention some of Giantland hostas...



H. 'Giantland Puckered Crevice' is a medium-large hosta with rounded, very corrugated, very rugose golden yellow leaves. This is the most corrugated and unruly hosta known to Jeff. "Everyone who sees it, wants it".



"H. 'Giantland Aftershock' has that WOW factor you've been looking for!" said Jeff. Outstanding medium/large clump of rounded blue leaves are beautifully cupped and corrugated with a shocking spark of green and white streaked in the center. "There is simply no other copper out there with this fantastic variegation", says Jeff. This hosta will leave you with "aftershocks!".



H. 'Giantland Butterfly Wings'. This cultivar has fabulous blue-green, corrugated leaves with a narrow rippled, creamy edge. Makes a big statement in the garden!



***H.* ‘Giantland Big Bastard’.**

“Now that is a BIG BASTARD!” were Jeff’s exact words when he came across this monster in his 8-year-old seedling bed. With a reaction like that it was a no-brainer to select this one to introduce. If you want a hosta that grows at you as you walk by and eats voles as a side snack, then this hosta is for you!



***H.* ‘Giantland Megalodon’.** A huge, vase-shaped hosta with horizontally held, rippled, shiny green leaves. Make a massive statement in the garden!

The sudden loss of Jeff and Penny was a huge blow to the family, but Ashley is determined to maintain Land of the Giants Hosta Farm and honor her father's legacy. With the support of many friends and her husband Pedro, Ashley is working hard to keep the business going and make sure Jeff's incredible hostas continue to thrive.

We are keeping our fingers crossed that Ashley will be able to maintain Land of the Giants Hosta Farm even in the difficult times we are experiencing now and we very hope that we will see some next amazing cultivars from this company on the market in the close future.

PS: We knew Jeff only through email communications, but we knew him as so nice person. He was always very kind to us, despite being so very busy. He showed a big interest in our breeding work... We remember Jeff as a man full of optimism, a cheerful spirit, and a great enthusiasm for hostas. In 2021, we noticed that Jeff's emails were becoming increasingly sporadic, and we suspected that something is wrong...

May God bless you, Jeff and Penny. Rest in peace!



Ashley Moscoso and her father Jeff Miller.



H. 'Giantland Serenity'



H. 'Giantland Royal Highness'



H. 'Giantland Karma'



H. 'Giantland Hearts on Fire'



H. 'Giantland Black Satin'



H. 'Giantland Ruffle Skirt'



H. 'Giantland Date Night'



H. 'Giantland Winter Solstice'



H. 'Giantland Magic Wand'



H. 'Giantland Neptune's Rings'



Fields of hostas at Land of the Giant Hosta Farm



Fields of hostas at Land of the Giant Hosta Farm



Fields of hostas at Land of the Giant Hosta Farm



Editors Note: Want to know more about the authors? You can find out more at:

<https://www.eurohosta.com/who-we-are>

<https://www.eurohosta.com/blog-buffalo-2023-en>

<https://www.eurohosta.com/blog-en>

Milan and Dana have also shared the following pictures with us.



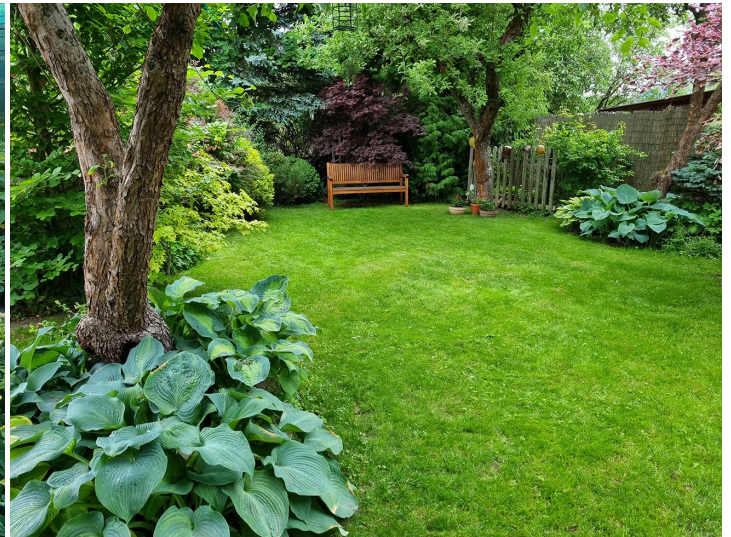
Milan and Dana Zubrik with grandson in the garden.



Milan and Dana Zubrik.



Production field, where about 1500 different hosta cultivars are planted and about 1000 of them annually offered for sale mainly via web shop - www.eurohosta.com.



Hostas in the garden.

GO HOSTAS!





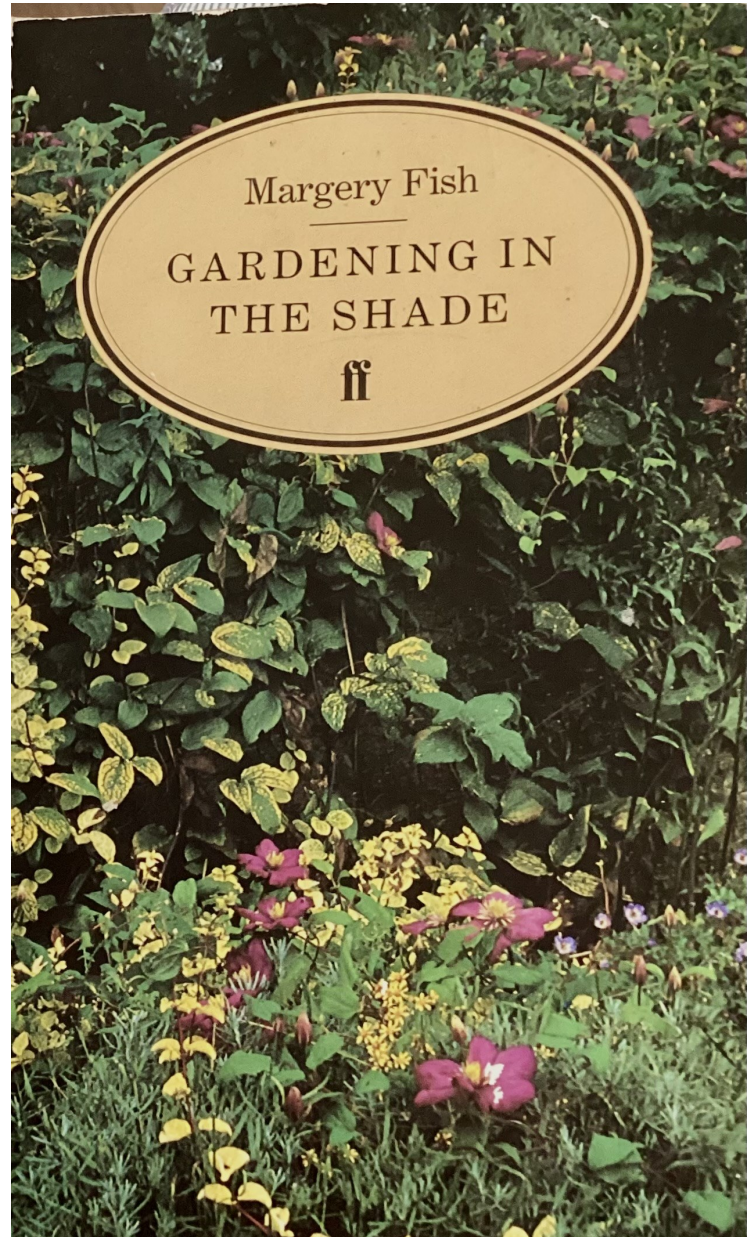
Book Notice

Clyde Crockett, Carmel, IN

Gardening In The Shade

By Margery Fish (Faber and Faber: London 1964)

Margery Fish is among the great English gardeners. She created a distinctive style. Although she is best known for her magnificent cottage gardens, she did not neglect shade gardening as so clearly revealed in this book. It is today rather sexist to separate the sexes but many would say the greatest is a woman who created the greatest garden on Earth, Vita Sackville-West. Fish is surely on a par with Vita although not nearly as well-known. She was a proponent of the English cottage garden with beautiful results where they can be seen at the East Lambrook Manor Gardens in Somerset, England. The beautiful photos here of Fish's gardens were taken by the owner, Mike Werkmeister, who has maintained these beauties.



The book is in 17 sections covering still useful information. The 16th is devoted to hostas and is quite complimentary. Although you find a lot of very common and forgotten varieties there, we must remember this was 1964. Fish is to be praised for her mentioning hostas. Indeed she may be the first author who writes about hostas.

Here are the pictures:



ELMG - Woodland Garden July 2019



ELMG-Lido May 22



ELMG-Lido May 22



ELMG-Terraces in June 2018



ELMG-The Ditch February 2023



ELMG-Woodland Garden May 2023

If you plan to go to England, this would be a good stop...
Happy Gardening,
Clyde



Hostas Happenin's

Don Rawson, Grand Rapids, MI

Ripples and Waves: Hostas in Motion

Claimed to be “the crookedest street in the world,” Lombard Street is an east–west road in San Francisco that is famous for a steep, one-block section with eight hairpin turns. Stretching from The Presidio east to The Embarcadero, most of Lombard Street is a major thoroughfare designated as part of U.S. Route 101. The famous one-block section with the death-defying turns is located along the Russian Hill district. It is a major tourist attraction, receiving about two million visitors per year, and up to a whopping 17,000 per day on busy summer weekends.



Photos from Wikipedia

Said to be the crookedest road in the world, Lombard Street during the day and at night.

The curvy design was first suggested over a century ago by insurance and business executive, Carl Henry. Henry owned half of the lots on the 1000 block of Lombard and land all around the street. Since the Lombard Street lots were inaccessible by autos, the property values were not as high as on neighboring streets. The landowners approached city engineer Clyde Healy, who came up with the street design. The plan was intended to reduce the hill's natural slope which was too steep for motorized vehicles. Eventually, the street with all of its curved switchbacks was constructed in 1922.

Federal law today stipulates that interstate highways have a maximum grade of 6 percent. A highway with a 6 percent grade means it gains or loses no more than six feet of elevation for every 100 feet of distance. The crooked block along Lombard Street, by contrast, has a 27 percent grade, is about 600 feet long, is one-way (downhill), and is paved with red bricks. The sign at the top recommends a speed of 5 mph. As a word of caution, you should make sure your brakes are in good working order beforehand!



Photos from Wikipedia

Before cars descend downhill, a caution sign at the top recommends a speed of 5 mph.

This segment of Lombard Street normally sees around 250-350 vehicles per hour, with average daily traffic reaching 2630 vehicles, according to traffic records of 2013. During peak times, vehicles have to wait up to 20 minutes in order to enter the Crooked Street segment. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors has been presented with petitions repeatedly to close the street to all except residents, but has decided there is no cause for the closure. To reduce habitual congestion and delays, future visitors

may be required to reserve a time and pay a fee to drive down the crooked street.

Of the various reasons for adding curves to a road, one explanation is the need to traverse elevation changes, such as in the case with Lombard Street. Parabolic vertical curves are used to provide a gradual change from one road slope to another so that vehicles may smoothly navigate grade changes as they travel. A grade which is too steep can cause vehicles to drift, skid laterally when braking, and become unstable when crossing over the crown to change lanes. These conditions are exacerbated by icy, snowy, or windy conditions.

When you are on most highways in the U.S., there are signs indicating steep slopes. Problems arise especially for larger vehicles such as trucks and motorhomes. However, even cars need to brake often to prevent speed from becoming too great for safety at turns. The biggest risk is brakes which can become glazed and over-heated, leading to brake failure. Furthermore, trucks which take curves at an excessive speed can cause rollovers.

In spite of the danger involved, driving on extremely curvy roads is downright exhilarating, making your spirits soar! But for most of us, the main function of roads is connectivity, not fun. Fun is just a bonus. Straight roads are more direct and have higher safe speeds. Nevertheless, scenic winding routes through mountainous areas are much more inviting. Sudden twists and turns can be as invigorating as a roller coaster ride — especially if you are driving a Lamborghini. (I don't. I can only dream.)

The Excitement of Curvy Foliage in the Garden

Similar to adding curves to a road which results in increased driving pleasure (or in some cases, stress!), putting frills and thrills on a leaf creates additional flair and style in the garden. That is one of the wonderful things about the genus *Hosta* — the unsurpassed variety of leaf sizes, shapes, colors, textures...and leaf margins. How boring the gardener's life would be if all hosta cultivars were the same...and if all had flat leaves! It would be like driving on roads which were all perfectly straight and flat, connecting point A to point B without a curve, turn, hill, or hollow.

Fortunately, curvy and rippled leaf edges in hostas are a genetically domi-

nant trait. Of the 38 or so species, the majority have wavy leaves —some more rippled and wavy than others. And as far as hybrids, a grand total of 1,157 hosta cultivars with rippled and wavy leaves are catalogued on the list of Rippled and Wavy-Leaved Hostas at <http://www.hostalists.org/>. Ruffled leaves which flutter in the wind are so stirring and lively. But not all ripples are created equal. Some varieties have many small, tight ripples while others display only one or two large undulations or waves.

Piecrusted, Rippled or Wavy – What’s Your Fancy?

If you have been a hosta gardener for some time, you surely have noticed that some plants have rippled or wavy leaves. But not all leaves with undulations are the same. Did you know there is a distinction between a rippled leaf and a wavy one? Mark Zilis explains the difference in *The Hostapedia* (page 34):

Waves and ripples differ in my mind, but are terms used interchangeably by many. Ripples are significant undulations of the outer 1-inch or so of the leaf blade, are much shorter than waves, and are usually borne in much greater numbers...Waves are fewer in number than ripples and affect a much larger portion of the leaf blade.

Serrations (sometimes called “frills”) are even tinier leaf undulations on the very edge of the blade, continuing into the petiole. Sometimes serrations can be found in combination with ripples and waves.

Yet another term you may have encountered is that some hostas have a *piecrusted* margin. The term *piecrust*, which refers to a tightly rippled leaf margin, was coined by Frances Williams to describe *Hosta* ‘Green Piecrust’.



Photo by Kate Hackworthy. Used by permission.



Photo by Vladimir Mirka. Used by permission.

The term *piecrust* was first used by Frances Williams in the 1950s to describe her creation, *H.* ‘Green Piecrust’.

Frances Williams of Winchester, MA was a pioneer in the world of hostas. Mark Zilis claimed that she is “...the most influential person in the modern history of hostas. Her correspondence with other collectors, hybridizers, and botanists from the 1930s until her death in 1969 fanned the flames of interest in hostas and led to the formation of the American Hosta Society.”

And now back to the term *piecrust*. The hosta which was eventually named ‘Green Piecrust’ was first noticed in her garden in 1951. As she watched it mature, she observed the neatly rippled leaf margin, and in 1957 she assigned a name to this distinctive-looking seedling which reflected its primary characteristic: the leaf edges resembled a pastry shell. So, ‘Green Piecrust’ it was. Three decades later, the AHS registered it on her behalf in 1986. And the term stuck. Since then, other hybridizers have “jumped on the bandwagon” and have included the term “piecrust” for their originations:

- ‘Blue Piecrust’ (A. Summers – 1986)
- ‘Chartreuse Piecrust’ (C. Owens – 1985)
- ‘Donahue Piecrust’ (T. Donahue – 1999)
- ‘Golden Piecrust’ (C. Noffsinger – 2000)
- ‘Grey Piecrust’ (T. Donahue – 1986)
- ‘Holly’s Velvet Piecrust’ (H. & D. Benedict – 1995)
- ‘Lime Piecrust’ (W. & E. Lachman – 1990)
- ‘Piecrust Power’ (F. Shaw – 2010)
- ‘Piecrust Promise’ (P. Cross – 2000)
- ‘Sum Piecrust’ (E. Elslager – 1999)

rip-ple (noun): a small wave, or series of waves

Ripples are shorter than waves. As you walk along a beach, you may hear the soothing sound of waves breaking on the shore. By contrast, throwing a stone into the water of a calm lake creates ripples on the surface. Ripples are a series of very small waves.

Hostas with rippled foliage seem to dance in the garden. There are many rippled hostas. In fact, Dr. Ed Elslager of Michigan even named one ‘Triple Ripple’. Note that “triple” has one letter *p*. “Tripple” is a misspelling. “Triple” is correct. Triple means three times something. *Hosta* ‘Triple Ripple’ forms a large semi-upright mound of heavily rippled foliage.

Combining ripples with curls and twists makes for a highly interesting leaf shape, as seen with ‘Ripple Effect’. ‘Ripple Effect’ is just about the coolest ‘June’ sport imaginable. The leaves have a wild twisting and curling that is just incredible!

The foliage emerges bright yellow in spring with a narrow blue margin. In summer, the center of the leaf turns chartreuse. Like ‘June’, if grown in sun the center will be yellow, but will be light green in heavy shade. Combining wonderful ripples and twists with attractive variegation makes this one unique.



Photo by CH Falstad. Used by permission.

Combining ripples and twists with attractive variegation makes *H.* ‘Ripple Effect’ distinctive.

Some well-known hybridizers over the years have focused on creating hostas with beautiful rippled leaf margins. Mildred Seaver (1913-2011) of Needham, MA, known as the “Queen of Hostas,” excelled with many impressive rippled introductions. Some of her best are ‘Komodo Dragon’, ‘Queen of the Seas’, ‘Sea Drift’, ‘Sea Frolic’, ‘Sea Gulf Stream’, ‘Sea Octopus’, and ‘Sea Wiggles’. How many of these are in your own garden?

Catching Some Waves

Surfing is a rich sport when it comes to terms, names, and expressions. Surfer slang and lingo comprise an entire dictionary of words. The sport itself is referred to as *catching some waves*. Waves that are too small to ride are called *ankle slappers*. By contrast, a massive wave is a *bomb*. A *double up* or *humpback* is when one large wave is closely followed by a smaller one. I guess you could say that some hosta leaves are ankle slappers, others are a bomb, and still others are humpbacks.

As Mark Zilis noted, “Waves are fewer in number than ripples and affect a much larger portion of the leaf blade.” A classic example of a wavy-leaved hosta is Hans Hansen’s superb origination, ‘Atlantis’. As a mutation of ‘Abba Dabba Do’, ‘Atlantis’ is partially tetraploid. The gold margin is much wider than the sport parent. The patent (PP17,093) states that ‘Atlantis’ “has large leaves with undulating margins with a twist at the leaf apex.” It makes a stunning wavy-leaved specimen. So, if you have the longing to “catch some waves” for your garden, I highly recommend it!



Photo by Pol Foerier. Used by permission.

***H.* ‘Atlantis’, a wide-margined sport of ‘Abba Dabba Do’, is a prime example of a wavy-leaved hosta.**

Conclusion

Flat leaves in the hosta garden are fine, but perhaps it's time to triple your ripples and add some rambunctious ruffles to the landscape. Whether piecrusted, rippled, or wavy, there are plenty of options to choose from. You may even decide to mix and match for the greatest variation throughout your shady glade. Adding some twists and turns to the leaf blade can make things even more interesting. As Josh Spece once remarked, "The rolling edges of a rippled or wavy-leaved hosta give the illusion of the plant being in constant motion, and motion always catches one's eye... You might say ruffled hostas add drama to the garden. And what garden couldn't use a little drama?"

Hostas in Motion

Serrated: 'Ginsu Knife', 'Jaws', 'Razorback', 'Restless Sea', 'Surfer Dude'

Piecrusted: 'Candy Dish', 'Choo Choo Train', 'Clovelly', 'Niagara Falls', 'Sea Drift'

Rippled: 'Cutting Edge', 'Neptune', 'Skywriter', 'Valley's Curly Wurly', 'Waterslide'

Wavy: 'Atlantis', 'Leading Lady', 'Sun Power', 'Sagae', 'Regal Splendor'



Photo by Jeroen Linneman. Used by permission.

H. 'Valley's Curly Wurly'





Hybridizer Corner . . .

Don Rawson, Grand Rapids, MI

In the Hybridizer Corner, we are on a journey to learn how to make successful hosta crosses, collect, clean and store hosta seed, plant and grow seedlings, and all the other things which are involved with such a venture. Thanks for joining us!

Review

Hybridizing should be goal-oriented. Setting goals is helpful in accomplishing many of life's tasks and is essential in a well-thought-out hybridizing program. Doing so will help to determine which plants to cross in order to make the new hosta that matches your goal.

Make sure your goals are realistic. Then choose parent plants which will most likely produce the intended results. Collecting a gene pool of hostas to work with is very beneficial. And now you are ready for making the actual cross, but remember that hybridizing is a long-term project. You will probably not end up with a perfect finished product in just one cross. Reaching your goal will likely involve generations upon generations of crosses, but each cross will get you a little closer to achieving it. So, let's get started!



Photo by Joanna Kovalcsik. Used by permission.
A typical hosta flower, with one pistil and six anthers.

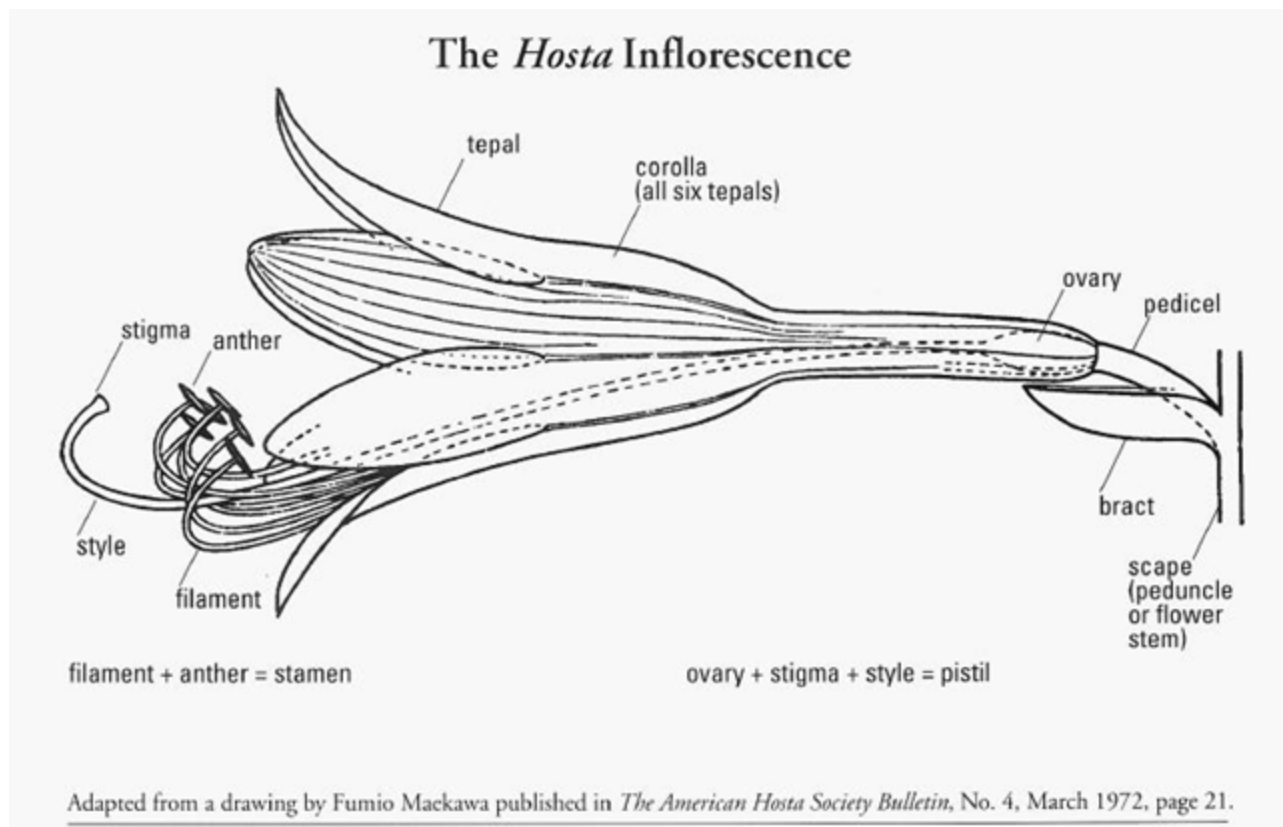
Hosta Flower Basics

To begin with, we will need to know a little about the hosta flower and how it works. The two main parts of the flower are the pistil and the stamens.

Typically, a hosta flower has one pistil — the female part of the flower. It is comprised of the ovary, style, and stigma. When the flower is open, the pistil often sticks out beyond the stamens. The end of the pistil curves upward, and at the tip is the stigma. This is where the pollen must be placed in order to pollinate a flower and produce seeds.

The male part of the flower is the six stamens. A stamen includes the filament and the anther. When the flower opens, the anthers produce fluffy, yellow pollen.

Can you find the stigma and the anthers in the diagram below?



Making Your First Cross

Making a cross is easy: it is simply moving pollen from one flower to another. Of course, this assumes that you have already picked the mom and the dad. The mom, or **pod parent**, is the hosta which you will put the pollen on, and with any luck it will eventually set seed which you can harvest and plant.

The dad, or **pollen parent**, is the hosta which you take the pollen from. For the pollen to work, it must be fluffy, dry and yellow. At this stage, the weather and time of day become important considerations. Moisture from rain, dew, or an overhead sprinkler ruins pollen. In addition, temperatures in excess of 85 degrees usually affect how well seed will set. Dry, cool mornings are the best times to accomplish successful crosses.

Beating the Bees

What about the bees and other insects? How can they be stopped from pollinating the flowers which you want to cross before you are able to do so? Depending on your schedule and preferences, there are several ways to go about this which will be discussed in a future newsletter. Meanwhile, let it be said that if you are an early riser, you can beat the bees to the flowers. Pollinating insects usually do not begin flying around until the sun has warmed things up a bit. So, if you can make your crosses early in the morning, there is no need to resort to other methods to prevent unwanted pollination. On the other hand, if you do not like crawling out of bed that early, there are other techniques which will allow you to make crosses without worrying about the bees ruining it for you.

Preparing the Flower to Receive the Pollen

There are several procedures which can be employed in preparing hosta flowers for pollination. One method is to slip a covering of some type (such as a plastic grocery bag or mesh pouch) over the entire scape. But you do not want to cook the flowers or break any of them off, so care should be exercised in doing so. The purpose is to keep insects from pollinating the flowers before you do.

Another method is to remove the flower petals the night before you will be pollinating. The petals act as a landing pad for bees and other insects. Once the petals have been removed, insects are not interested in landing on what remains of the flower. Be careful not to damage the pistil and stamens. In the morning, the stamens will be curved upward and the anthers will be covered in fluffy, yellow pollen. The downside of this method is that it requires a little planning ahead.

If you do not want to prepare the flowers for pollination the evening beforehand, the task can be done early the next morning. The first step is to carefully remove the stamens to avoid getting pollen on the pistil unless your desire is to self-pollinate the flower. Secondly, detach the flower petals. And lastly, apply the pollen to the stigma.



Photos by Joanna Kovalcsik. Used by permission.

1. Removing the stamens to prevent self-pollination.
 2. The flower showing the stigma after the stamens have been removed.
 3. Removing the petals so that the bees do not have a landing pad.
 4. The stigma after the pollen has been applied.
-

Collecting and Transferring the Pollen

Collecting the pollen is just a matter of gently removing the stamens from a hosta flower. You can detach and collect the stamens the night before, but there will be no yellow pollen on the anthers until they ripen overnight. By morning, the anthers should be covered in fluffy pollen.

As mentioned above, the actual act of pollination is very simple — you want to cover the stigma with the yellow pollen. There are various ways to apply the pollen to the stigma. One method is to use the stamen as a tiny paintbrush. Grab it with tweezers or hemostats and gently brush the pollen-filled anther against the stigma until it is yellow with pollen.

Another option is to use a tiny paintbrush. Mop up the pollen grains with the bristles of the brush and paint the stigma yellow. A word of caution: be sure to clean the brush very well when switching to different pollen so you do not unintentionally contaminate your crosses.



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia.

A hemostat is a surgical tool with handles that can be held in place by their locking mechanism.



Photo by Joanna Kovalcsik. Used by permission.

Using hemostats, ripe pollen is applied to the tip of the pistil

Marking the Cross

After you pollinate a flower, you will want to mark the cross to keep track of which flowers were pollinated with what pollen. If you do not bother to do so, you will not remember what the cross is and the parentage of the resulting seedlings will be unknown.

Jewelry tags are often used by hybridizers to label crosses. The pollen parent can be written on the labels with a fine tip marker. Carefully loop the tag or string around the pedicel of the flower like a noose and pull it tight. If marked with a UV-resistant pen, these tags will usually last until the seeds are ripe for harvest.

Once the cross is made and properly marked, it is just a matter of waiting to see if it was successful. Three to four days after pollination, the base of the flower (the ovary) will begin to swell if the cross was successful. Meanwhile, refrain from any unnecessary activity which may cause the pods to fall off. Seed pods are usually firmly attached to the scape, but brushing up against the scapes could cause a developing pod to fall off. If the cross was not successful, the flower will wilt and fall off or a pod will abort.



Photo by Joanna Kovalcsik. Used by permission.

If marked with a UV-resistant pen, these jewelry tags will usually last until the seeds are ready for harvest.

In the Next Issue...

So, now that we have covered how to make a successful cross, are you ready to give it a try? In the next issue, we will look at a few tools which make the job easier. It would be quite helpful to acquire these as you set up your own hybridizing program. Stay tuned!



Hosta 'Catcher's Mitt', Don Rawson

This bumblebee is starting the pollination process with out even realizing it! When bees land on a flower, like this hosta flower, their feet often slip into a little groove that holds pollen sacs. When the bee flies away, it carries off this sac like a saddlebag stuck on its feet. When the bee lands on another flower looking for nectar, the "saddlebag" falls off, the pollen falls out of the sac, and pollination is underway.



*H. 'Granny's Goosebumps',
Don Rawson*



*H. 'Gabriel's Wing', Don
Rawson*



And In Other Hosta News . . .

News about hosta registrations...

People have been paying more attention to Hosta 'Bob Olson' the last few months, and we all know why. What many people DON'T know is that photographs of H. 'Bob Olson' may be submitted to the Hosta Treasury by anyone – you don't have to be the registrant or the originator. We have many hosta varieties that were registered before digital photography was common (and required for registration) and we welcome photograph submissions by anyone who has appropriate clump, leaf or flower photos of registered varieties. Take a tour of your garden and see if you have any hosta you'd like to snap a photo to share.

Gayle Hartley Alley
International Registrar Genus Hosta

Editor Notes:

Reminder that all hosta registrations are due by November 30th, 2023

DO NOT ENTER REGISTRATION REQUESTS DURING THE MONTH OF DECEMBER.
Any registrations received in December will be discarded and must be resubmitted after January 1st.

When submitting photos, please do not crop them. The people preparing the photos for publishing on the Hosta Registry, need to crop the pictures to a specific size. They will crop your picture to the correct size that will showcase your hosta. If you feel you need to crop your picture before sending, crop it proportionally. Photos should be submitted in the highest resolution possible. High resolution photos are clearer and will showcase your hosta the best on the registration page.

Have a hosta you want to register but not sure where to start? Check out the information on <http://www.hostaregistrar.org/Registration/> Also check out the information available in the [Regisration Guidelines](#) pdf link on the webpage.



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**Please see cancellation policy at www.hostaconvention.org*

EARLY REGISTRATION if received by 1/31/24	\$ 240	<input type="text" value="\$"/>
STANDARD REGISTRATION if received by 4/30/24	\$ 255	
LATE REGISTRATION received after 5/1/24 before 6/8/24	\$ 275	
MEALS ONLY (companion)- Thursday Picnic, Friday Buffet & Saturday Banquets only	\$ 175	
GARDEN TOUR BUS includes bus fee and box lunches for Friday and Saturday garden tours - <i>*select lunch choice below</i>	\$150	<input type="text" value="\$"/>

** Select ONE Box Lunch per day (Tour Bus riders ONLY) - lunch on your own for self drive attendees*

Friday	<input type="checkbox"/> Deli Turkey Sandwich	<input type="checkbox"/> Smoked BBQ Chicken Sandwich	<input type="checkbox"/> Mediterranean Vege Sandwich
Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/> Bacon Turkey Sandwich	<input type="checkbox"/> Steak & Arugula Sandwich	<input type="checkbox"/> Mediterranean Vege Sandwich

** Optional Wednesday Tour (choose only ONE)*

WHALE WATCH/BOSTON (7:30am-5:30 pm) inc. transportation	\$ 126 /person	<input type="text" value="\$"/>
BOSTON/DUCK BOAT TOUR (7:30am-5:30pm) inc. transportation	\$ 108 /person	<input type="text" value="\$"/>

Thursday Clambake Meal Choice: <input type="checkbox"/> Lobster (1 1/4 lb) <input type="checkbox"/> Steak (10 oz sirloin) <input type="checkbox"/> BBQ Chicken	Saturday Banquet Meal Choice: <input type="checkbox"/> Garlic Parm Chicken <input type="checkbox"/> New England Scrod <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetable Kabobs	TOTAL DUE <input type="text" value="\$"/>
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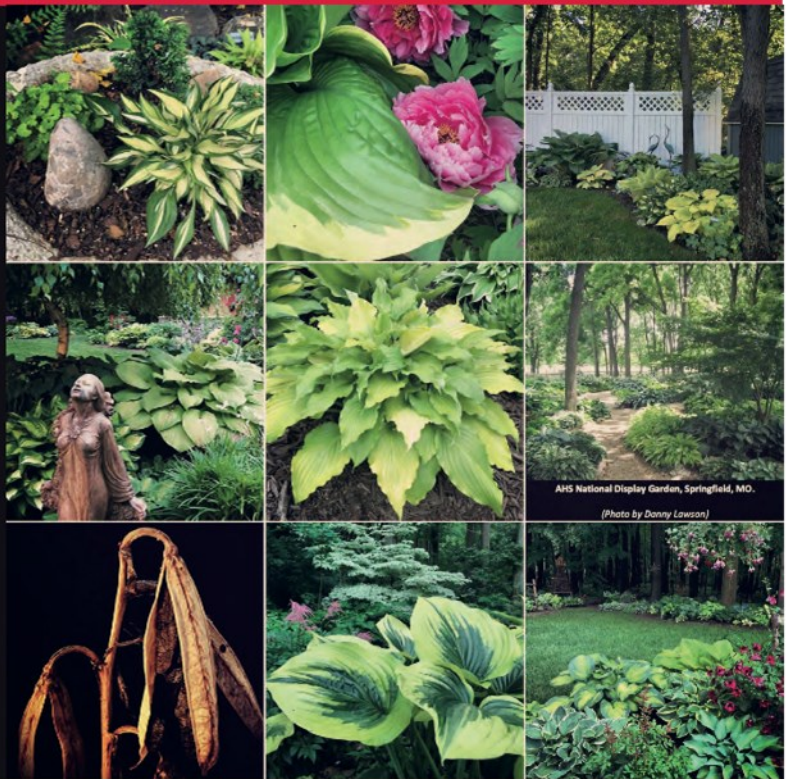
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Photo from AHS Hosta Registry
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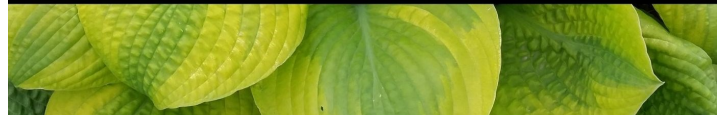
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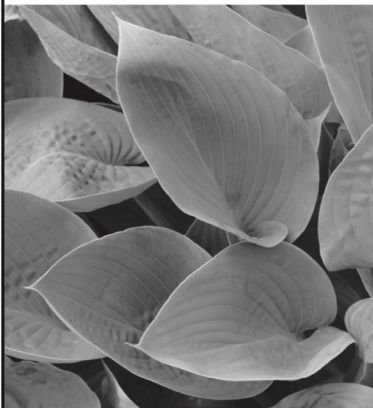
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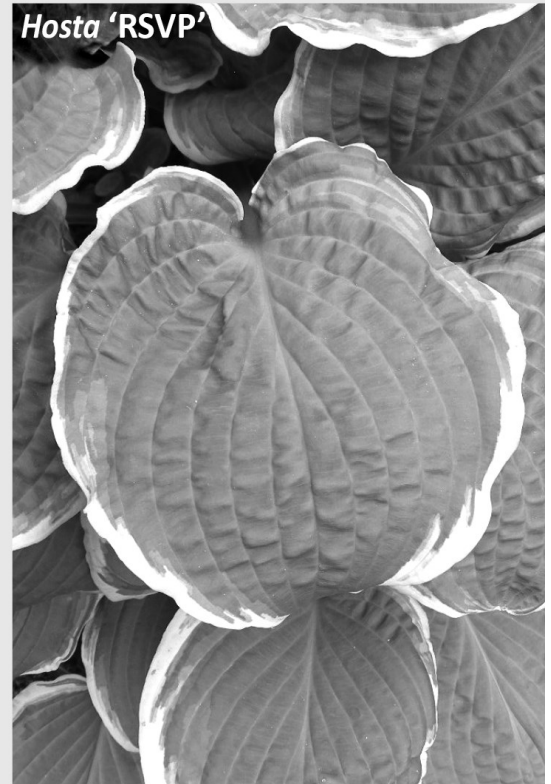
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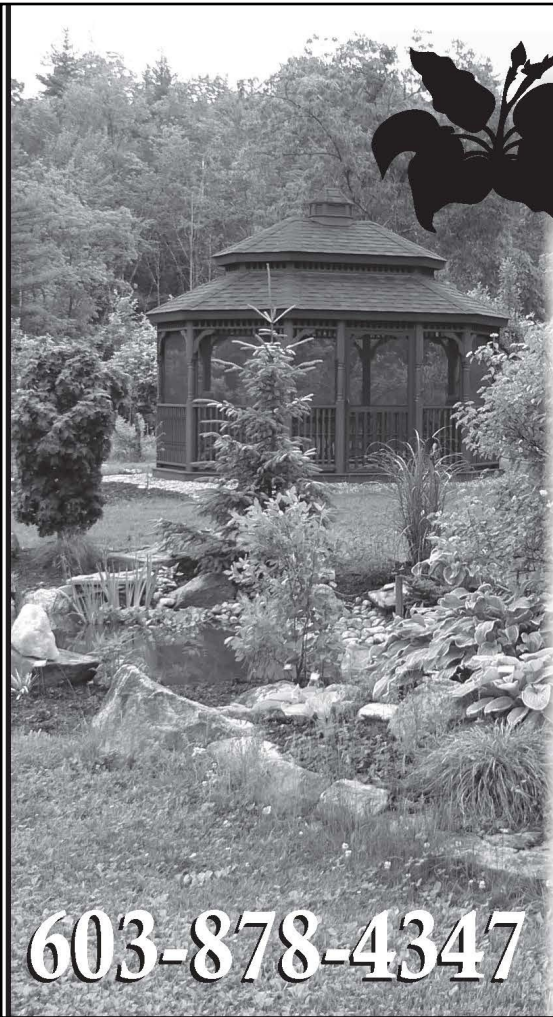
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