

The Green Hill Gossip

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OUR 35TH YEAR, Believe it or not!
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Hosta Breakthroughs

By Bob Solberg

This is the 35th year that I have been selling hostas. It's over half my life, so for me it seems like a very long time, maybe forever. Some say it is who I am. That said, the time has flown by and seems to only race faster each year.

I actually have been in and out of the nursery business for much longer. When I was a teen in Miami I had a little backyard nursery, like so many of the natives did then. My dad was fascinated with palms and we frequently visited Fairchild Tropical Gardens and its Montgomery Palmetum, maybe the largest collections of palms in the country. I too became infatuated with all the diversity of the group, the stately giants, the stocky dwarfs, some with blue or yellow foliage and red on the fronds and inflorescences. (Maybe sounds a little like hostas, don't you think?)

Palm seeds were abundant all over Coral Gables where my grandmother lived and they started finding their way into my pockets and home to be planted. Many never germinated but enough did to get me hooked. The cool thing about tropical plants is that they grow!!! From its bright red seeds the size of grapes you can grow a four foot Christmas Palm (*Adonidia merrillii*) in a couple of years. Success always breeds excitement, and later commitment, the good kind.

This was the 60's and the nursery industry was very different then it is today with its giant picture tags and trademarked plants. I think it was more a labor of love than big time business even for the largest nurseries. It was a time before plastic. Plant containers were recycled oil cans for quart pots, large food cans, the kind you can still see at Sam's, for gallons and golden powered egg cans for three gallons. It was a nasty business as in the heat and humidity of the tropics metal rusts quickly leading to dangerous cuts on dirty fingers. But I digress.

Yes, I have been selling hostas for 35 years, not as long as some but long enough to see hostas become the number one selling perennial in the US by far. The biggest breakthrough in Hostadom occurred in the late 70's, pioneered by my good friend Mark Zilis at Walters Gardens, when tissue culture was used to propagate the most common hostas as stock for field production. This still occurs today as I saw when I visited Holland a few years ago. Hosta liners were being planted directly into the field to produce bare root plants to be shipped worldwide.

If you have ever played the computer game Civilization you know that as you develop scientific advances, a combination of these will allow you to develop a greater improvement. For example: inventing "combustion" and "steel" allow the development of the "automobile". In the development of hosta civilization, it was the combination of plastic containers



Hosta 'Abundant Love'

and tissue culture that produced the biggest breakthrough.

Previous to that, hostas were almost exclusively grown in the ground in rows and divided with a knife, spade or chainsaw. Hostas were rare especially the slow growing ones. One of the reasons that 'Frances Williams' was so popular, besides its incredible beauty, was the fact that it was hard to get. A visit to an "old school" hosta nursery, that probably grew daffodils, iris, peonies, and/or daylilies also, usually resulted in a trunk full of cardboard boxes with freshly divided hosta shoots wrapped in newspaper with maybe a little dirt left on them. When arriving home they needed immediate attention.

Plastic containers changed all that. Today hosta collectors leave their new hosta acquisitions in their pots for days, weeks, or some of us even years. There is no pressure to get them in the ground. There is also no dirt in the back of your SUV, that is if you properly prop the pots up so they do not fall over while taking that curve at 65 mph. (Many collectors have plastic tubs to hold their purchases in their vehicles. I particularly like this because you must buy enough hostas at my nursery to fill the tub or they will fall over anyway.)

Tissue culture, while first used to propagate hostas sold in large numbers for mass plantings like 'Undulata Albomarginata', propelled hostas into the spotlight when plants like 'Francee' and 'Frances Williams' were produced. Now slow and even very slow growing hostas, like 'Tokudama Aureomarginata' could be produced in large quantities. They could be marketed in containers and became as easy to buy and house as breakfast cereal. Hostas had hit the bigtime.

Tissue culture was not without its growing pains however. Hostas reproduced by TC needed to be identical, like machine parts. Unfortunately, or fortunately as you will see later,

hostas are living, mutating organisms that do not always behave themselves. 'Francee' proved to be very consistent from tissue culture, since most of the off types were white and died but 'Frances Williams' was another story. Not only did tissue culture produce all gold-leaved forms but also forms that had leaves of half gold and half blue. A shipment of 100 plants might have as few as 25% being true gold-margined, blue-centered plants. This problem, coupled with slow, uneven growth and that ugly rust on the gold leaf edges in spring, helped to contribute to the decline in the hosta's popularity.

So producing true plants became the goal of tissue culture. Off types were casually thrown away since they could not be sold as the true plant. But 'Frances Williams' produced so many solid gold off types that someone got the bright idea to give them a different name and sell them as a new all gold hosta. (As hard as it is to believe, solid gold hostas were very rare at

that time.) In fact the AHS in 1984 registered the name, 'Golden Sunburst' not as a single clone but as a group name for all the gold off types from 'Frances Williams'. The same was done with all the gold sports of 'Tokudama Aureonebulosa'; 'Golden Medallion' is also a group name. We now know that those sports are not all identical but the nomenclature is still valid.

So instead of becoming problematic trash, hosta sports became a new way to create new hostas. This was not so much a technical breakthrough as it was a breakthrough in thought. Sports were now not only saved by tissue culture labs but actually sought out in the greenhouse and even in the tubes. Since variegation was still highly sought after any solid colored hosta that mutated any variegation was considered to possibly have great value.

So when Walters Gardens began to find a variety of variegated sports in its cultures of 'Elegans' they thought they had hit the jackpot. So much so that they not only introduced an entire series of these sports but they also began a trademarked "NORTHERN" naming system. NORTHERN HALO™, NORTHERN LIGHTS™, NORTHERN MIST™, AND NORTHERN SUNRAY™ were all introduced beginning in 1984.

Naturally, this caused a lot of excitement and like many others I was one of the first in line to purchase these new variegated *H. sieboldiana* hostas. NORTHERN HALO™, a wide white-margined form of 'Elegans' proved to be the most desirable of the group except there arose a slight problem in reproducing it, actually not so slight a problem. Instead of all the plants produced having the wide white margin, off types with narrow margined leaves were found also. Over time, and

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'First Blush'^{PPAF} Photo Contest is On the Web

I have a crazy idea. Our first red-leaved hosta 'First Blush'^{PPAF} has been a worldwide sensation. In Canada last summer it sent up several flushes of leaves, all with some red blush in them. I know it will look different in different gardens, in differing light and moisture. So let's have some fun with it. (Remember, hostas are supposed to be fun.)

If you will send me your 'First Blush'^{PPAF} photos with your name and location, I will post them on a special page on our website, www.HostaHosta.com. I promise to put mine there too. Just email them to me at HostaBob@gmail.com.

I will be curious to know when 'First Blush'^{PPAF} will blush in different parts of the country. Will the color all be the same or will some plants, because of growing conditions, appear purple or redder? Will just the early leaves blush as they do here or will later flushes of leaves also blush in your area? It will be fun to see.

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

By the way, I have forced a flat of plants of 'First Blush'^{PPAF} for Hosta College. The forced plants last year seemed to show more color than those in the nursery caught in the uneven swings of temperature. We will check that out again this year. Anyway, if you are a hosta hybridizer, we will have some plants for you that will probably bloom a month earlier or more than if they were in your garden. They might be fun to play with. We will have some forced plants available to ship also if you can't make the trip to Hosta College.

So please send me your photos and we can have a little fun with this, maybe a lot of fun!



Hosta 'First Blush'^{PPAF}
(Courtesy of Dimitry Komarov)

Be sure to visit our site at ... www.HostaHosta.com

What Makes a Good Hosta

From November 2011 Gossip Jr.

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

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

Next to a perfectly streaked seedling, nothing is more eye-catching than a white-centered hosta. Why do you think that ‘Undulata’ with all its wild, floppy scapes and late summer faults is still so widely grown today? The fact that it grows pretty well, especially if it turns green in the July heat, doesn’t hurt either.

Of course, new white-centered hostas originate from streaked seedlings. As the seedling clump increases in its number of divisions, some divisions will become white-centered, some hopefully white-margined and some almost green. At first, these white-centered shoots may be almost as large as the nearly green ones, deceiving us into believing that finally we have found a large growing, white-centered hosta. When these almost white divisions are removed from their greener cousins and forced to make it



Hosta ‘Curly Fries’

on their own, they usually shrink year after year until they struggle to stay alive.

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

grow well.

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

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

den; and I think we all tried. Unfortunately, small plants available a few years later had narrow green margins and melted out easily. I finally acquired a mature division, never wanting to let go of the dream, and it looked reasonable for a couple of years before declining into death. What seemed so easy to grow in Long Island, proved impossible for me. Even Mark Zilis, in the *Hostapedia*, ever the optimist, admits ‘Reversed’ has a “poor growth rate in nursery containers and in the ground” and dooms it to “second class status”. You can hear the sadness in his words.

So if one good clump does not make a great hosta, do ten in a row? Some hosta gardeners like to plant their hostas in groups, landscape style. Some plant threes, some plant rows. Some plant drifts of hostas, all one cultivar. Certain good growing hostas take readily to group activities and grow quite evenly. Others do not. Mass plantings of ‘Frances Williams’ and other *H. sieboldiana* types frequently do not grow in regiment, with a few plants often looking quite stunted. ‘Sum and Substance’ and other large hostas are not as dependable as ‘Royal Standard’ and other fast growing fragrant flowered hostas. *H. plantaginea* is an exception and rarely grows evenly in even a small grouping. Even though mass planting may not be its forte, ‘Sum and Substance’ is still a great hosta but why?

First, it is a large hosta, in fact a very large hosta. There is just something magical and unbelievable about a large hosta. A plant that goes zero to 6 feet wide in a few weeks is truly amazing and even if you were not there to see the transformation, somehow you can sense that it occurred by looking at the finished product. Then, are all large hostas good hostas? Well, pretty much. You probably do not need them all, but any large hosta clump is impressive. A large hosta also

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When the Hosta Bug Bites

I read on the Internet that they are now working on a vaccine for almost everything that ails us. I hope they do not find one for hosta fever. In fact, I hope they come up with a Viagra-like solution for its diminishing effects over time.

You know most very serious plant people just do not understand our loyal affection for hostas. They have never felt the spiritual connection we have with them and the ecstasy they give us each spring as they emerge from nothing to giant clumps in a matter of a few weeks. In their ignorance they believe that we have contracted some horrible disease that has numbed us to the wide range of other perennials that we should be growing. We have hosta fever.

I am personally offended when a “nationally renowned” horticulturist points this supposed affliction out to us when giving a banquet speech at one of our regional or national meetings. Just because he can’t see the magic doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist. Besides how infatuated can you get with bristly prairie grasses that all look the same or alpine plants you cannot keep alive? We do not have a disease, we are enlightened.

I think part of the problem is that hostas are a little like theoretical physics. Not everyone can wrap their mind around the complex biology that is a hosta plant. Even our best hosta minds can’t explain everything. From chimeras to ploidy, we have no unifying theory of hostas. They are just more complicated than we know. They stretch our brains. Wow! Now there is a reason to get infected with hosta fever if I ever heard one, not run from it. I love it!!!

But enough talk of plant folks that are outside the fold, let’s look within. Almost everyone I tell that I grow hostas says they

love them, even those that think we are addicted. They are sturdy, beautiful plants that somehow produce calmness in our gardens and within our busy day to day existence. They are dependable year after year when most things in life are not. If necessary, they are pretty much self-sufficient and never seem to mind neglect while at the same time they love to be pampered. They certainly do not need us as much as we need them.

We have all come to hostas little by little. We courted them or maybe they courted us. An evolutionary biologist might say that the hostas selected us to propagate them and spread this monotypic family of monocots endemic to Eastern Asia across the world. We now accelerate their evolution with all our hybridizing efforts and they get more advanced every day. Pretty clever, huh? They infected us with their “disease” if anything did.

So, for the sake of argument, what are some of the symptoms of hosta fever? Like I said we all come to it little by little, some slowly but some at light speed. It is a process, like falling in love. No one just one day walks in my nursery out of the blue and “buys one of everything”. Three hostas lead to twenty-five and then to maybe a hundred. For some this takes a lifetime, others a crazy three week period in June. The process is the same; in some of us it is just accelerated.

Here are some symptoms that we have all felt in our special relationship with our hostas.

1 Buying permanent labels. It may not be the first symptom of hosta fever but it is our first commitment to hostas. Their names become as important as those of our pets and children. We buy them name tags.

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

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

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

5 You begin to have favorites. You no longer like them all equally. Don’t worry the hostas do not mind, they understand, they like some gardeners better than others, too. You may even give some of your less favorite hostas to your neighbor, making room for new additions to the collection but at the same time not letting them out of your sight. They have just become young adults in your eyes and it is time for them to move out, but only just across town. Favorites are old faithful friends, not the newest flash in the pan. At least I hope so.

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WHAT MAKES A GOOD HOSTA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

gives you room for error. Even if your 'Sum and Substance' is in a "bad" spot, like on a tree root, and only gets four feet across, it is still a sight to see.

If almost any large hosta is worth having, what makes greatness? Hosta judges



Hosta 'Sum and Substance'

would argue distinctiveness. I prefer recognizability, is that a word? 'Sum and Substance' is easy to identify even for the non-hosta gardener. Huge, round, chartreuse leaves with an umbrella-like pose make a recognizable sight. The number of similarly identifiable hostas is maybe a few hundred but they too are not all great.

Color has always been number one on my list of traits for which to select hosta seedlings. We grow hostas in shady gardens for their blues, greens and golds, and their splashes of white and cream. They replace the riot of floral color in the sunny perennial border. Hostas are generally known for their beautiful variegation patterns but for me, solid colors better suit really large hostas. All gold 'Sum and Substance' is still more impressive to most of my garden visitors than all the various green and yellow forms of it we have. I personally prefer 'Parhelion' or 'Winter Snow' but I seem to be in the minority.

It is without saying, that a great hosta like 'Sum and Substance' must be easy to grow over a wide geographic area so that if for no other reason it will be widely propagated and sold. A hosta can only be great if we can all grow it. It must reach celebrity. Better yet it must become a household name. So the name itself takes on added importance as the fame of the hosta starts to spread. 'Sum and Substance' is one of the best names ever. The same plant with a lessor name, an obscure name, might not have reached such heights.

So what makes 'Sum and Substance' great is its size, its recognizability, its color, its good growth rate, its wide marketability, and its name. You might be able to name a few more things but greatness has something to do with the plant, something to do with the naming and extent of introduction and something to do with marketing, production and consumption. As with all celebrity, the timing must be just right, too. It always helps to be first when competition is less. Also, like the celebrities that fill the tabloids, because of their perceived greatness we can overlook their huge flaws. 'Sum and Substance' has its faults too, but we easily ig-

nore its crazy, wild flower scapes and as we cut them off as soon as the first flower opens. Hostas and people can never be perfect.

Can you name ten more great hostas? I will try. 'June' is large enough, and light-centered, with great color at least until it gets hot in July, has the name, (think of how many celebrities have only one name these days), and the marketing to make it great. 'Guacamole', despite its own crazy, wild scapes but with the added treat of fragrant flowers and good but not great color, grows so easily that it the perfect beginner's hosta. I think 'Paul's Glory' too is great and surpasses 'Gold Standard', whose time is past, as the best light yellow-centered large hosta. 'Blue Angel' is huge, has the name and all the right timing and too, is great.

Six to go, it gets harder now. 'Blue Mouse Ears' although not large, except for a mini, and not very blue, has riden its name to greatness. 'Paradigm' is the best growing 'Tokudama' type variegated hosta that there is and the color is unmatched. Most would add 'Sagae' and I guess I agree but the name, the fact that it is a narrow-margined plant for a year or two when are trying to sell it and that it emerges way too early are huge negatives for me. Likewise, 'Halcyon' may be the most dependable blue hosta on the market but the name congers up nothing in my mind and it is really a pretty plain plant but I guess because of its huge numbers worldwide it is great. I think however, I will choose a variegated form of it instead, 'First Frost' based on personal prejudice; I just love that plant.

The last two are almost a process of elimination. I will not go into why I believe that some of the most popular hostas are not all that great but the reality is that even if some hostas are not intrinsically great, it is their popularity that confirms their greatness. The same and reverse is true of the celebrities of this age; their popularity makes them great, if not their talent. For me 'Praying Hands' is very popular but not great, although widely sold and grown, not top ten.

Still two to go, what do you think about 'Empress Wu'? Why not, it is huge if not



Hosta 'First Frost'

terribly distinct, grows well and has a huge cult following. I like it wherever I see it. Seems like a better bandwagon choice than 'Praying Hands'. Now for actually number eleven, 'Sum and Substance' is certainly top ten, let's have a vote for future greatness. I believe my customers tell me which hostas are really great. They buy them in record numbers. Based on customer demand 'Curly Fries', although small, is destined to be a great hosta. It did also win best seedling in two separate contests, so the attendees and judges must love it too. It is not without its flaws but now it basks in its fifteen minutes of fame. It is this year's AHGA Hosta of the Year.

So in the end, hostas are great because we make them great. It helps if they are large, distinct, good looking, grow well and have a good name. Sometimes a good name is all you need. It's a crazy business, like show business.

WHEN THE HOSTA BUG BITES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

6 You start to limit your interest. There are a lot of hostas in the world, more all the time. No one can have them all. Eventually, you realize that if you limit your serious hosta collection to a subset of the total number of hostas, then you may get most all of that smaller group. Maybe it is blue hostas or giant hostas or hostas named after dogs, almost any parameter works. This is the beginning of the road to becoming an expert in a small corner of Hostadom.

7 You plan your vacation around hostas. Buying, visiting nurseries, or just attending a regional meeting, you spend those valuable two weeks in the summer chasing after new hostas. Along the way, as you visit more and more of the villages of Hostadom and come to know their inhabitants your spirit starts to become entwined in the magic of the "Friendship Plant". Hosta folks become friends that share each other's joys and sadness as well as their hostas.

8 Hostas invade your dreams. I dream of hostas, not every night but they are usually dreams I remember. Nothing earth shaking ever occurs in them but I always awake happy.

9 You stay in the garden even after dark talking to your hostas. You relax pruning scapes and maybe doing a little weeding as the moon rises over the garden. Dinner is put on hold, much to the chagrin of all the other members of the household.

10 Mice invade your hosta collection. No not voles that would not have a happy ending, but hosta mice are pretty benign and darn cute. 'Blue Mouse

Ears' these days is an entry hosta for many new converts. They grow it in a trough, dish, or "mouse nest" with other variegated mice. Anyone can do it and they can live almost anywhere, just keep them out of the pantry. Mice often lead to the love of minis and the joy of container gardening. You can have your hundred or so hostas on your deck if you like, safe from the vermin that might like to feast on them.

11 You ask for a Green Hill Farm gift certificate for Christmas. Yes, this is an obscene commercial plug but you get the idea. There is nothing better than spending someone else's money on hostas and besides don't we already have everything we really need except more hostas?

12 While we are at it, spending more for a hosta than we ever thought we would, and then doing it again. We all have a budget and a limit for what we will pay for a hosta. It is never a firm number and for some only a guideline, but it is real. A sure sign of hosta fever is when you cross that line for the first time. Then if you do it again, well it really isn't a limit any more then is it? Mature hosta collectors tend to buy fewer hostas but more expensive ones as space limitations in the garden become more of a factor than monetary ones.

13 You read the *Hostapedia* all the way through. Then Google becomes your new closest friend as you search for the sources of rare hostas listed as "may no longer exist". Unfortunately, most do not.

14 You join a hosta group. Maybe it's an online forum where there are no meetings, dues or pressure to volunteer or the friendly confines of a local hosta society in your corner of Hostadom. Facebook is a favorite hangout for hostaphiles. Yes, you

can feel the spirit of Hostadom in cyberspace but sooner or later you want to put a face with that email address. So you and your Internet buddies plan a tour of hosta gardens and nurseries, or to attend a regional or national hosta meeting. There are aspects to Hostadom that are just not visible through the Internet. The real affection we feel for our hostas and each other that is only totally felt in person. Hosta folks are the friendliest people I know. All of us are only too happy to talk hostas with anyone who loves them too. We have no royalty in Hostadom, only heroes.

15 You visit a hosta hybridizer where no hostas are for sale, imagine that. You see hundreds of wonderful little plants that have only numbers and no names. You get frustrated as you realize that almost all these one-of-a-kind hostas will find the compost pile in the next couple of years. Hopefully you can adopt one or two, a gift from an appreciative hosta hybridizer.

16 You experience hosta lust. I learned about lust in Sunday school at probably too young an age. But I never really felt lust until I caught hosta fever. Wanting a hosta that you can't have is a harsh form of unrequited love. It is painful but a reality in Hostadom. Many hostas are in very limited supply, especially streaked ones, and unless you have something really good to swap, you will have to walk away empty handed.

17 You infect others with hosta fever. You may just harmlessly invite some friends over to see the garden. You may give hostas to your children or the nice old lady around the corner. You may spread the hosta gospel with great vigor, giving lectures to garden clubs or writing this kind of silliness in your own newspaper like me. You see the joy hostas can bring and by including others, you try to make the world a

more pleasant place.

18 You start to grow hostas from seed. First you plant the ones that the bees pollinated and then a few that you actually cross by hand. Buying hostas, believe it or not, becomes less important than growing your own little babies. You also start to swap seeds with other hybridizers and maybe join the Seed Growers Forum online.

19 You name a hosta. It may be one you find "sport fishing" at Walmart or a gift from God that appears magically in a clump in your own garden. It may be a chance seedling; it may be really good. In any case, it will make your heart sing to have finally become entwined in the joint evolutionary path of humans and hostas. Please just don't name it something we all can't spell.

20 You sell hostas. Now you really are crazy!!! Enough said, you are a lost cause.

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

Our commitment to them leads to a commitment to our fellow hosta growers. First as guides that become close friends but later as partners in the thing that is Hostadom. Hostas make us irrational in an organized rational way. Hosta fever is not something to be avoided but something special to be embraced. Just ask any of the many afflicted.

Hostas make life better. Hostas make life fun! Need I say more?

HOSTA BREAKTHROUGHS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

hindsight is always 20/20, Van Wade collected eight different forms with various margin widths by 2002 and named the best, most true if you will, 'American Halo'. Walters Gardens has also introduced a form that is wide margined like the original under the name 'North-ern Exposure'.

The lesson from all this is that hostas can sport in more ways than we can imagine. Every time a hosta sports to another form it is possible that a new clone has been produced at least at the DNA level even if they appear identical. But frequently they do not appear identical. Thus, now every new sport is given a new cultivar name, no matter how similar it may be to another one, just to be on the safe side. Again, this was another thought breakthrough.

There is one more revolutionary breakthrough in the world of hosta sports that we are still trying to get our minds around. It started years before with plants like 'Radiant Edger' but it was 'Patriot' and 'Minuteman' in the early 1990's, and then to a lesser extent 'Grand Tiara', from which we learned that hostas can double their chromosome number in tissue culture. A normally diploid, 2 sets of chromosomes, hosta in tissue culture can become tetraploid with four sets of chromosomes. While this would be lethal for you and me, it can make for a pretty attractive super wide-margined hosta.

Furthermore, it seems like variegation, ploidy need not be the same throughout the entire hosta. The leaf margin can be tetraploid while the leaf center remains diploid. Such is the case of 'Patriot' it is 4-2-2, whereas 'Minuteman' another sport from 'Francee' is totally tetraploid, margin and leaf center, 4-4-4. We also now know that the number of sets of chromosomes does not necessarily have to be two or four. 'Sum and Substance' is triploid, three sets, and many other hosta sports have additional chromosomes or more likely are missing some and do not have complete sets of all their chromosomes. 'Final Summation' for example is 2.9-2.9-2.9 not 3-3-3 like its parent. Still it manages to survive and look fantastic doing it.

Hostas still intrigue me. They can change their colors seemingly at will and their ploidy, too. Sure, tissue culture has been an environment conducive to change because of the free food, crazy hormones, and tiny sizes of the plants but they still have to have flexible enough DNA to mutate on their own. I have "mutated" my personality over the years but this body just seems to be subject to the winds of time. Maybe that is why hostas still impress me.

But people have had their part in shaping what modern hostas look like too. For centuries the bees hybridized hostas in Japan, China and Korea, and more recently in Europe and the US. In the last hundred or so years and especially in the 35 years I have been living with them, hosta hybridizers have fairly thoroughly mixed the hosta genome to create totally new hostas the likes of which the bees never dreamed. Here are some of the human hosta breakthroughs. My apologies if I omitted your favorite.

In the early 1980's we all thought of '*H. sieboldiana*' 'Elegans' as a species. In fact, to this day the image of this magnificent hosta is what we still search for on the northwest shores of Honshu in Japan as the species itself. In fact it is a hybrid and not a plant from the wild. It is a cross of what we now call 'Tokudama' and '*H. sieboldiana*', the blue color and cupping coming from its pod parent and its great size from the pollen parent.

Georg Arends listed this plant in his nursery catalogue in 1905 in Germany. Surely propagated from seed and coming fairly true it had a wide distribution long before tissue culture. Most all of our blue hostas can be traced to 'Elegans', it is the beginning of blue. Because it easily sets so much seed, there are maybe hundreds of cultivars that claim its parentage, including what we call '*H. sieboldiana*' types. The species, ironically, is the rare, elusive plant and until recently thought not to exist.

As the story unfolds, Frances Williams of Winchester, MA began seriously collecting

hostas about 1935. In those days most of the hostas available were thought to be species or varieties of species. She also began to grow hosta seedlings from her plants, some that she hand pollinated and some that just appeared in her garden. Almost everything was new and interesting then, including white flowers. Remember, there was still a species mentality.

Famously she purchased a gold-margined '*H. sieboldiana*' from a nursery in Bristol, CT in 1936 thought to be a sport of 'Elegans'. It was named for her by G. W. Robinson of the University Botanical Garden in Oxford, England after she sent him a piece of her plant. While 'Frances Williams' became a new source of yellow seedlings like 'Sunlight', it is its beauty and popularity that helped bring new collectors to Hostadom.

More importantly, however, it was a little, thin-seedling, somewhat unattractive '*H. sieboldii*' seedling of hers that had the greatest



Hosta 'Sourpuss'

impact on hosta hybridizing. Her 'Beatrice', often confused in the trade, is the source of variegated chloroplasts in almost all of our variegated hostas, at least until the time of 'Dorothy Benedict'. That little streaked plant passed on variegation through Kevin Vaughn's hybridizing efforts and then on to Bill and Eleanor Lachman and also Dick Ward. All from a little hosta that would be one of the first culled in these days of demanded leaf substance.

Kevin Vaughn crossed a seedling of 'Beatrice' (Vaughn 73-2) with 'Frances Williams', completing the circle, and produced the breeder 'William Lachman' for example, a streaked plant with size, substance and elegance. Two species, '*H. sieboldii*' and '*H. sieboldiana*' that the bees could never cross because of their widely divergent bloom times were now combined to form hostas never seen before.

Kevin then crossed his 73-2 'Beatrice' breeder with '*H. plantaginea*' to produce variegated seedlings with fragrant flowers, 'Summer Fragrance' being the most notable. A sibling to 'Summer Fragrance' was probably the parent of 'So Sweet' and 'Fragrant Bouquet'. (The pollen parents are now unknown.) For me 'Fragrant Bouquet' is a mediocre hosta but the sports that have come from it are some of the best hostas introduced. Breakthrough hybridizing coupled with the hosta's natural ability to sport in tissue culture produced an entire line of breakthrough plants.

A breakthrough in blue hostas occurred in 1961 when Eric Smith took some pollen from a late, reblooming plant of '*H. sieboldiana*' and crossed it on to the first flowers of a '*H. Tardiflora*' scape. He had to finish ripening the seeds inside in a solution of sugar and water. He was able to germinate about 30 seeds of which 14 were blue. The result was his famous group of "Tardianas", of which 'Halcyon' was the first introduced seedling from this historic cross in 1974. He was never able to set seed on 'Tardiflora' again. (*The Hosta Journal* Vol. 13, page 18.)

He was, however, able to cross this first generation (F1) with itself and produce a second generation (F2) of very blue hostas with variable leaf shapes. 'Blue Wedgwood', 'Blue Dimples', 'Hadspen Blue' and 'Blue Moon' are some of the most widely grown. While 'Blue Moon' might be closer to Eric's goal of producing small blue hostas, it is 'Halcyon' that has been propagated worldwide and is an incredibly dependable hosta in a wide variety

of growing conditions. It too has produced a large family of variegated sports in tissue culture. The most famous is 'June', a beautiful, sturdy yellow-centered plant that has become the most popular hosta in Hostadom.

Speaking of famous hostas, a word or two should probably be said about 'Sum and Substance' maybe the most identifiable hosta we have. While its parentage is a mystery, lots of us try to guess it, it is now believed to have originated in Florence Shaw's garden. The exact details of the transaction may never be known but Paul Aden acquired 'Sum and Substance' from her in 1974 or 1975.

Aden brought clever naming and marketing to Hostadom when he and Klehm Nursery began tissue culturing and selling on a national scale. Color catalogues and eventually *The Hosta Book* published first in 1988 not only bolstered Paul's claim to be "Mr. Hosta" but also created a huge appetite for

variegation, quite a breakthrough.

Herb Benedict also had one of the first plants I saw of '*H. longipes hypoglauca*', a white backed purple-petioled wild plant from Japan. In the early 1990's he had grown twenty seedlings from this plant and had placed them all in a row in his hybridizer's garden. He and Van Wade selected their favorite, 'Best of Twenty', and the rest were destined for the compost pile. Generous as ever, Herb allowed me to have one and save it from its doomed fate. Of course, it became 'One Man's Treasure' one of the primary parents for hybridizing purple hostas.

But it was Roy Herold that popularized what we now call "red" petioled hostas. He too used '*H. longipes hypoglauca*' and crossed it with other late flowering purple-petioled hosta species like '*H. kikutii*', '*H. pycnophylla*', and various forms of '*H. longipes*'. In 1993 at the AHS Convention in Columbus, OH he brought several of his red hostas to the Hosta Leaf Show, all with cute "red" names like 'Red Sox', 'Cinnamon Bun', 'Cinnamon Sticks', and 'Red October', the latter two being the most widely introduced and later used in purple petiole breeding. With this breakthrough in color, red hosta leaves became a realistic fantasy.

My contribution to red hosta leaves began with crossing '*H. yingeri*', a newly discovered species at the time, and a gold form of '*H. tsushimensis*'. 'Whiskey Sour' and 'Strawberry Banana Smoothie' were produced with bright red petioles and then mixed with the secret ingredient, '*H. clausa normalis*'. The result was salsa, 'Mango Salsa' and 'Peach Salsa', and a vigorous helping of 'Beet Salad'. Of course, when 'Beet Salad' was crossed with a seedling with a '*H. kikutii*', '*H. pycnophylla*', '*H. longipes hypoglauca*' ('One Man's Treasure') background, 'First Blush' ^{PPAF}, the closest thing we have to a red leafed hosta, was produced.

While I was focused on red, Mary Chastain turned dark green hosta leaves black. She started with of all things apomictic and tetraploid '*H. ventricosa*' and produced triploid 'Lakeside Black Satin'. Later she produced an entire group of variegated hostas with very dark green color. Many are streaked forms that have the potential to be very good breeders. I believe that this breakthrough still has more hidden potential to be exploited by some clever hosta hybridizer.

Not all great hosta breakthroughs have the potential to produce a great family of related plants, however. Some just stretch our minds and muddle our brains. 'Striptease' is such a case. Where did that little white highlight come from? Is there a L1, L2, and L3? Why is that silly plant so unstable, sporting all kinds of 'Hanky Panky'? How is variegation and ploidy related? Can a 'Stitch in Time' save us from all this frustration? I don't know! I hope someday we will.

Finally, the next great breakthrough in hostas might not have anything to do with hosta leaves at all. Hosta flowers could be the next frontier of hosta hybridizing. What color would you like, yellow, red, black, brown (maybe not), or blue? If we do not already, soon we may have all of these. 'Miracle Lemony' from H. Sugita in Japan is a yellow flower '*H. tsushimensis*' hybrid that will hit the market later this year in the US and is already available in Europe. Jeff Moore in this country has a group of seedlings with red veins in the flowers and had a black veined seedling 'Edgar Allan Poe'. Will hostas one day have flowers that rival daylilies? Now that would be a breakthrough!!!

Hostas flurry, mist, and speckle, and spill their milk. I could go on and on as I think about it but I will save all that for another time. There are more exciting times ahead in Hostadom and I do not want to miss any of them.

colorful hostas. Had 'Sum and Substance' not found its way into the "Garden of Eden" it would have probably died in obscurity. Hosta marketing then is another breakthrough that propelled hostas to the number one perennial in the US.

Bob Savory was the complete opposite of Paul Aden. He loved the hostas that filled his Minnesota garden and nursery. He also loved to hybridize them and was willing to try inventive ways to create radically new hostas. He treated "750 '*H. nakaiana*' plants with a mixture of hormones and vitamins in order to "break" more dormant eyes and to possibly stimulate mutations... 'Golden Tiara' was one of several induced sports that appeared in this batch" (AHS Newsletter Vol. 16 No 3). Certainly a mutation of '*H. nakaiana*' 'Golden Tiara' was the first small gold-margined hosta but is best known for its very rapid rate of increasing shoots. It too is the parent of a very long line of hosta sports both diploid and tetraploid.

Bob also introduced, possibly from this same group of treated '*H. nakaiana*' plants, 'Lemon Lime', a wonderful small hosta. It has proved to be as a good breeding parent for miniature hostas. It is the pod parent of my 'Shiny Penny' and its more famous sport 'Cracker Crumbs'. Both 'Golden Tiara' and 'Lemon Lime', while sharing some of the same characteristics of '*H. nakaiana*', are much different in appearance from it. Both are breakthroughs for distinctness and having rapid growth rates.

Most all new variegated hostas before 1980 inherited maternally Frances Williams' or Kevin Vaughn's '*H. sieboldii*' ('Beatrice') chloroplasts to produce their creamy white colors. In 1983 Ralph "Herb" Benedict registered a streaked seedling produced by selfing 'Frances Williams' which he named 'Dorothy Benedict' after his wife. He now had an alternative breeder which contained no '*H. sieboldii*' traits, '*H. sieboldiana*' (with 'Tokudama') traits only. It also set lots of seed with almost any pollen parent easily and bloomed early in the season.

'Dorothy Benedict' brought all those "big hosta" genes into variegated hybridizing but unfortunately also a very slow growth rate. Plants of it were rare initially and it brought ridiculously high prices in auctions. Eventually, through the work of Ed Elslager and others, thousands of streaked seedlings were produced and now its prodigy are considered many of the best hostas for producing

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The Local Gossip 2016

'First Blush' PPAF in the Garden Gate Magazine

Hosta folks do not market their plants very well. Yes, they use social media, websites, and some even still use paper catalogues, dinosaurs like me. Most hosta nurseries however do not have an advertising budget. I remember learning at my father's Solberg School of Business that a 10% figure was reasonable for marketing and advertising. With all these free Internet opportunities many hosta growers think that they have found a way to save that 10% in costs. In reality, advertising dollars now need to be spread over a much wider number of options. All bring in new business but none as much as before. That 10% does not go as far as it once did.

Gardening magazines are good sources of new customers if not as good as in the last century. These customers may be general gardeners who want a new hosta or two but want something really special and are willing to pay for it. Several gardening magazines have a new plant feature article after the first of the year. They promote new plants for the gardening public, plants that wholesalers hope



Hosta 'Ladybug'

you will demand from your local garden centers and mail order retailers. It is marketing by large wholesalers to the consumer. Unfortunately, hostas are rarely featured, something I am trying to change.

"Garden Gate" magazine has "The Best New Plants for Sun and Shade". These are touted as "must-have" plants for 2016. This year I was able to get a photo, description and drawing of 'First Blush' PPAF in the lineup. There is a huge photo and the usual plant tag information, zones, etc. as well as who introduced the plant and where to get it. For me the best part of the entire presentation is the little drawing of the plant in bloom. It would make

a perfect hosta tattoo.

Right after the magazine hit the streets our phone began to ring with new customers that were willing to pay the introductory price of \$75 for the plant. Again it was not like the flood of known hosta folks like last year but it was a new demographic. You would be amazed how many really good gardeners there are who do not have Internet access.

"Garden Gate" is an interesting publication in that it has no advertising. It is funded by subscriptions. It does have a network of the largest growers in the country that regularly fill their pages with new and exciting plants that they are marketing. It is just one more little piece of the pie in our marketing program.

The 2015 AHS National Convention

First let me thank every one of you that visited us in North Carolina last June. I am done apologizing for the heat; although it did demonstrate some of the environmental extremes in which we try to grow our hostas. We did have cooling thunderstorms most every night that perked up the gardens but also added to the humidity. We only had one case of heat exhaustion so I consider that a success.

We had 418 folks attend, pretty impressive. All seemed to have a great time and enjoyed the gardens, The North Carolina Farmers Market, the plant shopping and even the box lunch. Nancy's tie-dye convention bags were a big hit, something that had caused her many nights of worry. Even the buses were flawless except for a weak air conditioner here or there.

All in all it was a great success and no one could believe that we put it all together in just two years. I again want to thank all the folks that helped both locally and from all around the country. I will appreciate and remember your support forever.

In case you did not notice, we do not have a local hosta club here anymore to host a convention. Nancy and I did have help from several people as I have said before but the locals that helped were true volunteers. All that has changed now, because we hosted the convention we sparked enough local interest that Jennifer Siegenthaler formed the Central Carolina Hosta Society as an online Facebook group and now a brick and mortar club with officers, by-laws and money. This is what hosting a national convention is supposed to do, increase local interest and participation. Please thank her at Hosta College when you see her there.

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

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

'Curly Fries' is the AHGA 2016 Hosta of the Year. Yea!!!

Our unusual little, yellow, agave-like hosta, 'Curly Fries', has been selected the American Hosta Growers Association Hosta of the Year for 2016. It was also selected as one of the top 25 hostas on the American Hosta Society 2012 Popularity Poll as well as their 2012 Mini Poll. I had no idea how popular it would be but of course I am thrilled.

Nothing seems to come without a little controversy these days. (Some may suggest that I may have even created this one.) The question has come up, again, "Is 'Curly Fries' really a mini?" I always thought it was a small but through a technicality it is registered as a miniature for leaf show purposes. Size in leaf shows is determined by the area of a typical leaf, length times width. Anything 6 square inches or smaller is a mini.

Very narrow-leafed hostas, like 'Curly Fries' (6" X 1") are considered minis although they are larger plants. I have suggested the idea of having a biological standard to judge size instead. One often used is anything 'Blue Mouse Ears' size or smaller is a mini. 'Curly Fries' makes a larger clump and thus is a small.

Size aside, the selection of 'Curly Fries' to all the above is very good news for hosta hybridizers. In the past, it is hosta sports that climb the popularity polls and are selected Hosta of the Year. Seedlings do not fare as well. Neither do small plants, or solid colored hostas. 'Curly Fries' is a small, solid yellow seedling with interesting leaves and lots of personality. It should give all of us seed growers hope that that little unique seedling in the seedling tray we like so much, if given a good name and a little marketing can rise to the highest heights of hosta popularity. So keep up the good work.

Green Hill Farm Business Update

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



Hosta 'Urchin'

nursery we had the good fortune to partner with Mark Zilis and his son Andy to grow baby hostas for us. They no longer have greenhouses so we now receive our baby hostas in plastic bags right out of the rooting jars. Last March, I flew to Rochelle to pick up the first shipment. They must be shipped overnight so shipping can run about the same cost as a Southwest Airline ticket for one. I brought back 5000 hostas in my carryon.



Hosta 'Hovercraft'

The company that was supposed to root them for us went out of business two weeks before we were supposed to get that shipment so I was forced into an emergency situation and was fortunate to find a local nursery with some bottom heated beds that we could rent. The next three months were a learning experience.

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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 'Sourpuss'



Hosta 'Blue Perfection'



Hosta 'Her Eyes Were Blue'



Hosta 'Lime Zest'



Hosta 'Lemon Love Note'



Hosta 'Lemontini'



Hosta 'Petticoat Junction'



Hosta 'Giantland Mouse Ears'



Hosta 'Tidewater'



Hosta 'Mike'



Hosta 'Pebble Creek'



Hosta 'Transformer'



Hosta 'World Cup'

Bob's Hybridizer Tips

Editor's Note: These ideas are just the basics, the starting point to begin thinking about hybridizing hostas. In your attempt to actually produce marketable seedlings, and naming seedlings is what this is all about, you will undoubtedly come up with many more questions than can be answered here. Do not be afraid to ask them to me or your friendly, local neighborhood hosta hybridizer. We all have different ways of doing the mechanics of hybridizing because we all have different personalities, goals, and ideas of what we like in a hosta. There are no wrong ways to hybridize, just do it. All you need to do is plant a few seeds and see what comes up. When you have a favorite, I would love to see a photo.

Step 1 Goals

-- Visualize the seedling you want to create. Use the salad bar method. Choose the (plate) size, the color of green(s), and then load on the vegies (substance, texture, waxes, flowers, etc.).

Survey introduced hostas for similar types. Study their parentage and make improvements or reduce faults.

Study different methods of dabbing pollen and combine several ideas to form your own methods that fit your personality. If you are not an early riser then put your breeding stock in a bee proof cage.

Begin to understand how hosta genes work. We know relatively little about hosta genetics but the traits of size and color are fairly well known.

Consult other hybridizers for ideas on how to accomplish your goals. Most are very free with free advice.

Plan your record keeping system. From the beginning, make it easy and detailed enough for all the data you think you will need. You will need a computer if you want to search the data or a lot more time. Do not make this a chore or you will not do it.

Specialize in a small group of hostas, like giant hostas or blue hostas.

Step 2 Pollination

-- Pollen varies, select for good pollen, pollen that is abundant, fluffy, and usually golden, not yellow, in color.

Try crossing both ways. For whatever

crazy reason, one way may yield more seed than the other.

Try pollinating different times of the day, new evidence suggests that you can successfully dab pollen on morning flowers late into the evening. Pollinate *H. plantaginea* at 8:00 in evening after the new flowers open, not in the morning.

Try saving pollen day to day, week to week. I keep it dry on tinfoil in the house.

Try freezing pollen in film canisters or for you digital photographers in the Sunday to Saturday pill containers.

Protect your cross from bees. I keep my hostas in a shadehouse but removing all the flower parts except the pistil works well in the garden.

Let the bees work for you, too. Remove all the scapes except for the cross you want made and let the bees do it. Also, try some bee-pollinated seed from seedlings that you have had trouble setting seed. Much of it will be selfed seedlings with some outcrossing.

Step 3 Seeds

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

Dry the pods in a paper envelope for at

least a week.

Seeds can be sown in October or sooner. No cold period is needed.

Soak seeds 24-48 hours before sowing, Ed Elslager showed this increases germination.

Sow seeds in moist seedling mix and lightly cover.

Use domes and bottom watering, flat in a flat, to keep moist.

Seeds can also be sown in seed beds in the garden, planted in fall or spring.

Step 4 Growing Seedlings

-- Don't ask me how to grow seedlings, I am horrible at it. Give me a liner and I am a wizard, but seeds grow differently for me every year.

Sometimes, I want to grow my seedlings quickly. I sow the seed in October under 24 hour lights and transplant as the third leaf appears. I then transplant as necessary through the summer and many will bloom the first year.

Usually, I want to grow them grow slowly. For many crosses I must wait for a couple of years to cull any of the seedlings, so there are space concerns for these hundreds of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

SPRING 2016

Complete Retail Hosta Listing

♥ indicates our introductions

"New and exciting!!!"

♥ **'First Blush'**^{PPAF} (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. We do plan to patent this hosta. **\$55.00 Limited**

♥ **'Abundant Love'** (D. & M. Beilstein 2016) - ('Love Pat' X op. seedling) - Large, (30" X 46") This is a wonderful blue classic form hosta from Doug Beilstein but with a little twist. The heart-shaped heavily puckered leaves are folded and twisted in a random way that gives a lot of movement to the clump. It makes a large mound with dense flowers just above the foliage. **\$40**

♥ **'Ambrosia'**^{PPAF} (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. **\$35**

♥ **'Blue Perfection'** (Solberg 2015) - (Sport of 'Ambrosia'^{PPAF}) - 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. **\$35**

♥ **'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. **\$20**

♥ **'Her Eyes Were Blue'** (D. Dean, M. Schwartzbauer 2008) - ('Frosted Dimples' X 'Sea Frolic') - Medium, (12" X 30") Named by Mary Schwartzbauer for her mother this Don Dean seedling was selected for its long lasting very blue color. It grows into a medium mound with leaves that are both ruffled and puckered, an unusual combination. Fertile and early flowering, you should try this in your hybridizing program. **\$25**

♥ **'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 from Doug Beilstein. **\$40**

♥ **'Ladybug'** (D. & J. Ward 1996) - ('Vanilla Cream' seedling) - Mini-Small (10" X 22") I like minis that grow and look a little different. This hosta is both. It is an interesting yellow seedling from 'Vanilla Cream' and Dick Ward that has ruffled leaves and a rapid growth rate. It is a large mini but still a perfect fit with the rest of your little ones. **\$20**

♥ **'Lemon Love Note'** (D. & M. Beilstein 2016) - ('Quill' X op. seedling) - Mini-Small, (10" X 20") This little hosta is better than it looks in the photo. It is a wavy, highly ruffled mini that grows rapidly into a neat bright yellow mound. A seedling of Doug Beilstein's, it has nice lavender flowers, too. And I just love the name. **Special \$25**

♥ **'Lemontini'** (M. Zilis 2009) - (Sport of 'Blue Dimples' X 'Shining Tot') - Mini, (7" X 12") This is one of the "tini" series from Q & Z Nursery. I think 'Apletini' is probably the best of the group but this little bright yellow hosta comes in a close second. It grows well and its bright color will delight you in early spring. I have been impressed with it even as a liner. **Special \$15**

♥ **'Lime Zest'** (M. Zilis 2009) - ('Shining Tot' X unknown) - (6" X 14") This little hosta was a surprise last summer. It held its dark green color all summer and 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. **Special \$15.**

♥ **'Mike'** (B. Webster 2010) - Huge, (30" X 46") When we first saw this large blue hosta it reminded us of 'Sum and Substance', a blue 'Sum and Substance'. It is a seedling however that makes a very impressive clump in the garden. It is spectacular in a pot. **Limited \$30**

♥ **'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. **\$40**

♥ **'Pie a la Mode'** (M. Zilis) - (Sport of 'Color a la Mode') - Medium-Large, (20" X 48") This large hosta has a little chameleon in it. It emerges in the spring with a rich yellow border and a dark green center, a very attractive color combination. In late summer the margin may turn almost pure white! Two hostas for the price of one. Something a little different in a variegated hosta. **\$20**

♥ **'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**

♥ **'Transformer'** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ('Blue Angel' sport) - Huge, (28" X 54") In late summer it is just another big blue hosta but in the spring it will transform itself again into a beautiful center-variegated mound with streaky blue margins. A sport of 'Blue Angel' it grows well and forms a 4-5 foot clump. Very limited of Doug Beilstein's lucky finds. **Very Limited \$50.**

♥ **'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. **Special \$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. **\$20**

Medium to Large Hostas:

♥ **'Envy'** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ('Neat Splash' X 'Gosan Sunproof') - Medium, (14" X 36") This flashy hosta has a very showy yellow margin that will become white in late summer. A seedling of Doug Beilstein's, it has a somewhat upright habit making a medium-sized clump. It always catches my eye from across the hoop house. Perfect next to any very blue hosta. **\$20 or "Two for \$30"**

♥ **'Evening Blush'** (D. Dean 2013) - ('Hideko Tajima' X 'Purple Verticulated Elf') - Medium, (14" X 36") Even if this medium-sized hosta never bloomed, it's pointed blue leaves with rich purple petioles would make it a stand out in the garden. The purple flowers however are spectacular, just look above. Truly a complete hosta from Don Dean. **\$30**

♥ **'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. **\$25**

♥ **'Final Summation'** (Solberg 2008) - (Sport of 'Sum and Substance') - Large, (20" X 60" or more) This is the dark green-edged sport of 'Sum and Substance' that for many years I have searched for all over the hosta world. It was selected for its wide green margins, superior rich colors and slightly cupped, very round, giant leaves. It has typical lavender flowers in July. **\$20**

Our New Hostas for 2016

'First Blush' PPAF
'Abundant Love'
'Ambrosia' PPAF
'Blue Perfection'
'Giantland Mouse Cheese'
'Her Eyes Were Blue'
'Hovercraft'
'Ladybug'
'Lemon Love Note'
'Lemontini'
'Lime Zest'
'Mike'
'Pebble Creek'
'Pie a la Mode'
'Tidewater'
'Transformation'
'Urchin'
'World Cup'

♥ **'First Frost'** (Scolnik, Solberg 2002) - (Sport of 'Halcyon') - Medium, (16" X 34") "Great hosta sports start with great hosta parents." 'First Frost' is a frosty white edged sport of 'Halcyon'. Blue leaves emerge with a sharp margin the wonderful color of the center of 'June' and then turn pure white. Lavender flowers in July. It also holds up well in the garden until the "first frost". AHGA Hosta of the Year for 2010 and Benedict Award Winner! **\$15**

♥ **'Grape Fizz'** (Solberg 2011) - ('Rhapsody in Blue' X *H. plantaginea*) - Large, (16" X 36") Here is a hosta with heavily subenced green leaves that might look a little wild and crazy if grown in some sun but has the most wonderful large purple striped, gently fragrant flowers. It flowers late, in August, but is well worth the wait. I grow mine in a container on the deck. **\$20**

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BOB'S HYBRIDIZER TIPS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

plants. These I sow in January or even March under 18 hour lights and may or may not transplant once that first year. I overwinter them in the flats and they are culled the next spring or repotted again. This works especially well for purple-petioled seedlings which show their color best after a dormancy.

Step 5 Selection

-- Selecting a seedling is different than culling one. You select the ones you want, they are what you want. Culling is taking out the trash, it is what is left. Choose what you want and throw away the rest. Be ruthless, you will just throw them away in a couple of years anyway.

Most all your crosses will have a goal. Go back to that goal and select the seedlings that have the trait or traits you wanted. Keep seedlings that have that trait intensely. Frequently, but not always, these plants will pass that trait along in your next cross.

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

Save some seedlings for hybridizing, even if flawed, if they have traits that you want

to pass on. Also, select for good pollen and good seed set in these "breeders".

Visit other hybridizers and compare your seedlings to theirs. Get their opinions of your seedlings also. Discuss which traits are valuable in each seedling and which need to be corrected.

Compare your seedlings with other similar introduced hostas. Determine if yours are distinct and improved.

Step 6 Naming

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

The name for your seedling should "look" like the plant. The name 'Blue Mouse Ears' has added greatly to the value of that hosta.

The name should connect with other hosta folks in a positive way. ("Angel" names are better than "Devil" names, in most cases.)

A bad name can kill a great plant.

Green hostas need the best names.

Naming a hosta with a person's name can be a great gift but it generally hurts the marketability of the plant. Please do not name one after me.

Short names fit better on labels.

Do not force a name you have wanted to use for years upon a seedling that it does not fit.

Step 7 Propagation

-- If a seedling is good enough to name, it is good enough propagate.

If you want large numbers of your newly named seedling, hundreds or thousands, use tissue culture. If you do not want to sell the plant yourself, all types of contracts can be arranged with several different nurseries. I will be glad in an unbiased way to discuss all the options with you, if you have a new hosta you would like to introduce widely.

If you only need small numbers, for sale or for plants to share with others, division is the best method for propagation. It is important to keep all your seedlings pest free if you wish to propagate by division. This can be a very profitable way to introduce hostas.

Ever thought of seed strains? It is not the usual method of propagating named hostas but can be done using a trademark name and similar looking seedlings. 'Elegans' was introduced in this manner.

Step 8 Marketing

-- If you are propagating a seedling, you might as well spread the word about how much you like it.

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

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

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

Giving your named seedlings to garden visitors may suit you better and is very rewarding also.

Step 9 Hybridizing is Fun!

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

Remember, it is not supposed to be work, hosta hybridizing is supposed to be fun!

SPRING 2016 COMPLETE RETAIL HOSTA LISTINGS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

♥ **'Guacamole'** (Solberg 1994) - (Sport of 'Fragrant Bouquet') - Large, (24" X 48") This large open mound of rounded gold leaves with a dark green margin is the perfect beginner's hosta. It is a fast grower if given some direct sun and one of the last to go dormant. Large lavender fragrant flowers in August, too. AHGA Hosta of the Year for 2002! **\$15**

♥ **'Hallelujah'** (M. Zilis 2010) - ('Halcyon' X 'Blue Betty Lou') - Medium-Large, (16" X 33") This seedling has the pedigree of two great hostas, 'Halcyon' and 'Blue Betty Lou'. It is medium to large with bright blue leaves that are cupped like a decorative serving dish with strong venation and good substance. Its simplistic beauty is classic. **\$20**

♥ **'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**

♥ **'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. kikuitii* 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. kikuitii*, 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**

♥ **'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. Nancy loves it because it is really big but also distinct. **\$20 or "Two for \$30"**

♥ **'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**

♥ **'Lime Ripple'** (Ed Schultz 2011) - (Seedling of unknown parentage) - Large, (22" X 38" or larger)

This very new hosta from Ed Schultz is a wonderful lime gold color, brighter in the sun, with large heart-shaped leaves that are nicely rippled, hence the name, and somewhat puckered. It is a sturdy plant that will make a strong statement in morning sun. It is an early bloomer and good breeder. **\$20**

♥ **'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. **\$25**

♥ **'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. **\$25**

♥ **'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 perfect 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 or "Two for \$30"**

♥ **'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 or "Two for \$30"**

♥ ***H. plantaginea* 'Doubled Up'** (Solberg 2011) - (Tetraploid sport of *H. plantaginea*) - Medium to Large, (20" X 30") smaller and more compact than the species. Found in tissue culture stock at Green Hill Farm and tested for ploidy in Holland by Ben Zonneveld, this fully tetraploid form of the species has very glossy and rubbery leaves, makes a more compact clump, and has larger flowers and a unique fragrance. It makes a great pot plant for the deck or patio. **\$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 or "Two for \$30"**

♥ **'Plum Pudding'** (Solberg 2011) - ('One Man's Treasure' X seedling) - Medium, (16" X 24") A seedling from our purple hybridizing line, this medium-sized hosta has unusually dark green rounded leaves with very good substance. Rich purple scapes and flowers appear in September. Seed is very easy to set. It is a customer favorite and great for hybridizing or displaying in a container. **\$25**

♥ **'Potomac Glory'** (R. Whitmore 2002) - (Sport of 'Potomac Pride') - Large, (20" X 40") This yellow-centered form of the classic 'Potomac Pride' make a large, sturdy, spreading clump. The leaves have a metallic glint to them when grown in morning sun that demands attention. It has large lavender "spider" shaped flowers in June. It is a very distinctive and attractive addition to the hosta bed. **\$20**

♥ **'Potomac Pride'** (T. Avent 1995) - (*H. yingeri* X 'Blue Umbrellas') - Large, (28" X 48") While I was creating yellow hostas from *H. yingeri*, Tony Avent was using it to create blue ones. This hosta makes a very attractive large mound of shiny metallic blue green foliage. It is easy to grow and sun tolerant in Northern gardens. Still a great unique hosta. **\$15**

♥ ***Hosta rectifolia* SILVER STAR™** (K. Muroya) - (Collected in Japan) - Medium, (18" X 24") Imagine finding this hosta in the wild!!! It is the best form of *H. rectifolia* to date and is brightly variegated, too. Its white-margined leaves and very upright habit make it the perfect hosta for the centerpiece in a mixed container of perennials, annuals or mini hostas. It has tall, straight scapes with purple flowers in late July. **\$15**

♥ **'Rough Knight'** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ([King of 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. **\$20 or "Two for \$30"**

♥ **'Sno Cone'** (Solberg 2009) - (Sport of 'Night before Christmas') - Medium, (10" X 24") It's back, just in time to cool you down this summer. With thicker, darker leaves than its parent and a brighter white center 'Sno Cone' makes a dense flat clump. The white centers will "green up" in the hottest July weather, protecting the leaves from melting. A white-centered hosta that is easy to grow, my favorite kind. **\$20**



Hosta 'Evening Blush' and its flower

♥ **'Sourpuss'** (D. Chopko) - (Sport of 'Lemon Meringue') - Huge, (30" X 64") This fantastic sport of 'Lemon Meringue' is the pride and joy of Dave Chopko. It not only makes a huge clump of green foliage bordered in yellow but brought the huge price of \$720 at the AHS Auction last summer. Be sure to give this one half a day of sun, lots of and fertilizer, and then stand back. **\$35**

♥ **'Sugar Snap'** (Solberg 2011) - (Sport of 'Sweet Sunshine') - Large, (22" X 48") This dark green centered sport of the yellow gold 'Sweet Sunshine' makes a great fragrant-flowered hosta even better. It is very vigorous of course, but also maintains the cupping and puckering in the now variegated leaves. It has the look of a 'Tokudama' with the bonus of near white fragrant flowers in June and July. **\$20**

♥ **'Tarheel Blue'** (Solberg 2013) - ('Powderpuff' X 'Skylight') - Small to Medium, (14" X 32") A good blue hosta should have great blue color and hold that color well into the summer. This small hosta does both; it is my best blue yet. The secret is in the wax. A cross of two very waxy parents, 'Powderpuff' and 'Skylight', it makes a nice dense clump and stays blue here into July. Some morning sun will bring out the best in it. **\$25**

♥ **'Tropicana'** (M. Zilis 2010) - ('Sea Prize' X 'Yellow River') - Medium, (19" X 40") This new seedling from Mark Zilis is a chameleon of color. It emerges in spring with a bright yellow leaf center bordered in white that later will become light green. New leaves will again be yellow, giving the plants two colors of leaves at the same time. It makes a medium-sized clump that will catch your eye in spring or summer. **\$15**

♥ **'Victory'** (M. Zilis, Solberg 2003) - (Sport of 'Elation') - Huge, (36" X 84") This is an awesome hosta, one of the best ever. Yes, this wide white-margined

THE LOCAL GOSSIP 2016, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

rience, developing our own special method for rooting hosta liners. For me I do not want them totally in a greenhouse situation. There are too many pest problems. So we developed a system where they are acclimated in a heated house but then finished at our nursery outside. I am proud to say that the result was some pretty good looking liners. Production should be less stressful in the future.

This year we are tweaking the production, adding fans for good air circulation and a plastic umbrella to manage our monsoon periods of thunderstorms. If we can get the

production we need out of the labs then we should have a good crop of some new and interesting hostas for our wholesale customers this summer. Our new liner list should come out the end of March.

Finally, Bob the Historian

I have always had an interest in history. I was at that impressionable age when our country celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Civil War, "The War of Northern Aggression". As an aside, it is interesting how differently the war was portrayed over the past five years as we celebrated its 150th anniversary than it was in the 1960's. Anyway, I would love to write history as you can see

from my cover article this year but all that research might destroy my eyes.

I have held several positions in the AHS from Journal Editor to Vice President for the Genus Hosta, to AHGA Liaison and sat on several committees. The one position that I have always coveted was, no not President, but Historian. I am happy to announce in this little newspaper with its massive circulation in the thousands, that this winter I have been appointed to the position of my dreams.

In February, I met with George Schmid, the previous keeper of the archives and returned home with six boxes of old copies of *The Hosta Journal*, newsletters, and all kinds of tidbits. My goal is to find a

permanent public location to house all of these materials and the great influx of new more interesting letters and research materials that will become available in the near future. Any suggestions you have for such a home for our archives would be most welcome.

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

SPRING 2016 COMPLETE RETAIL HOSTA LISTINGS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9



Hosta 'Rough Knight'

'Blue Mouse Ears' (E. & J. Deckert 2000) - Mini, (6" X 12") A very tight mini mound of very thick, rounded, mouse-like, blue-green leaves. Lavender flowers on very short scapes in July. Cute as its name and now a classic! **\$10**

'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. **\$20 or "Two for \$30"**

'Cat and Mouse' ^{PP#20862} (H. Hansen, Shady Oaks 2007) - (Sport of 'Blue Mouse Ears') - Mini, (3" X 6") This much sought after sport of 'Blue Mouse Ears' has a lighter, hazy yellow leaf center. It remains smaller than its parent making it just that much cuter. Lavender flowers appear in June and July. No "mouse" collection is complete without this little guy. **\$25**

'Chorus Girl' (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - (['Goddess of Athena' X 'Blue Veil'] X ['Neat Splash' X 'Gosan Sunproof'] X 'Golden Friendship') - Small, (11" X 21") I am always attracted to cupped and puckered hostas and I especially like little ones. This little beauty makes a tight clump of bright gold leaves that are held upward toward the sun. A seedling of Doug Beilstein, it is a great plant for hybridizing. **\$20**

♥ **'Cody'** (Solberg 1996) - ('Shining Tot' X *H. venusta*) - Mini, (5" X 10") Cody turned 21 last year, when has the time gone? Well, he's back in the catalogue but this dwarf mound of shiny green foliage with good substance may not fit him very well any more. Both, however, are still just "too darn cute." **\$15**

♥ **'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 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 the 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**

♥ **'Fantasy Island'** (Solberg 2002) - (Sport of 'Island Charm') - Small, (7" X 12") This little white-centered hosta with wide green margins and a third color of green sandwiched between has put on a show for years in my shady garden. Its lavender flowers on pink scapes make you stop and stare in mid-summer. It is pretty as well as vigorous. **\$15**

'Green Mouse Ears' (E. & J. Deckert 2004) - (Sport of 'Blue Mouse Ears') - Mini, (5" X 9") This miniature hosta has "mini mouse ears", greener and smaller than its parent. It maybe a little slower to grow also which makes it the perfect solid colored

hosta to put with two variegated ones in your new mini bowl. Cute little scapes with lavender flowers appear in June. **\$15**

'Hideout' (Leonard Jones) - (Sport of 'Hidden Cove') - Mini, (4.5" X 11") This little fella has very curly, white-centered, narrow dark green leaves that appear to be in constant motion. It is a fast growing hosta that favors some cool sun and plenty of water. A great container plant, it blooms in June and July with lavender flowers. **\$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**

'Lakeside Dragonfly' (M. Chastain 1997) - (Seedling of unknown parentage) - Small to Medium, (12" X 30") A classic hosta from Mary Chastain, its wide white margins demand attention. It forms a fast growing, flat mound of highly colored foliage that is happy growing in the mini bed or in the front of the hosta border. Lavender flowers appear in late July. This one will give you instant color. **\$15**

'Leather and Lace' (D. Dean 2013) - (['Liberty Bell' X 'Urajiro Hachijo'] X 'Ebony Spires') X 'As-tral Bliss') - Small, (11" X 27") The first time I saw this wonderfully ruffled seedling of Don Dean's, I literally got goose bumps. This small blue hosta has a creamy white border and forms a tight pinwheel in the garden. It is unlike any hosta I know, unique and very beautiful. **\$25**

'Lightning Flash' (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - (['Color Fantasy' X 'Alabama Gold'] X 'Venetian Blue') - Small, (9" X 16") We are introducing this flashy little hosta just for fun. It is another of Doug Beilstein's seedlings that has very narrow blue leaves with cream streaks. It is vigorous and yes, it does produce streaked seedlings. It will make you smile. **\$20**

'Little Devil' (H. Gowen) - ('Swoosh' X *H. venusta* sport) - Mini, (5" X 12") This cute little white-margined mini has rich green-centered elongated leaves that have a nice little ripple. It is a rapid grower, perfect for a fancy container. Lavender flowers in late July and very popular. **\$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**

♥ **'Tilt-A-Whirl'** (Solberg 2013) - ('Corkscrew' X 'June') - Small, (11" X 18") Sometimes things do work out the way you planned. I wanted to take my hosta 'Corkscrew' and give it blue foliage, so I crossed it with 'June'. This small, upright, highly twisted hosta is the result. Perfect in a pot. **\$35 limited**

♥ **'Tongue Twister'** (Solberg 2008) - ('Iwa' X 'Blue Blush' o. p.) - Small, (8" X 18") With its dark green

leaves that twist upward out of the clump, this great little hosta looks as fresh in October as it does in May. It has great substance, rich color, and is cute to boot. The light purple scapes produce light lavender flowers in September and light purple pods in October. My best "long season" hosta, still green here in late November! **\$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 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**

"Two for \$30":

'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. **\$20 or "Two for \$30"**

'Envy' (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ('Neat Splash' X 'Gosan Sunproof') - Medium, (14" X 36") This flashy hosta has a very showy yellow margin that will become white in late summer. A seedling of Doug Beilstein's, it has a somewhat upright habit making a medium-sized clump. It always catches my eye from across the hoop house. Perfect next to any very blue hosta. **\$20 or "Two for \$30"**

'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. Nancy loves it because it is really big but also distinct. **\$20 or "Two for \$30"**

♥ **'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 or "Two for \$30"**

'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 leaved, medium-sized hosta, 'Petticoat Junction' has a lively appearance, with its tight ruffles and twisted leaf tips. I love this look. **\$20 or "Two for \$30"**

♥ **'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 or "Two for \$30"**

'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. **\$20 or "Two for \$30"**

Ordering Instructions

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

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

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

ORDER FORM

Green Hill Farm, Inc.
P.O. Box 773
Franklinton, NC 27525
Call:
919-309-0649 Nursery
Email:
HostaBob@gmail.com

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 payment refunded. But please call us first and let us know of any problems. Thanks, Bob and Nancy.

Name _____ Phone _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Date _____ Desired Shipping Date _____
VISA/ MC # _____
3 Digit Sec. Code _____ Exp.date _____
Signature _____

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

Come see us at

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www.DixieHosta.net

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in St. Louis, MO

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www.StLouisHosta.org

American Hermerocallis Society Convention June 29 - July 2

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For more information visit:
www.Daylilies.org

Midwest Regional July 7-9

in Champaign, IL

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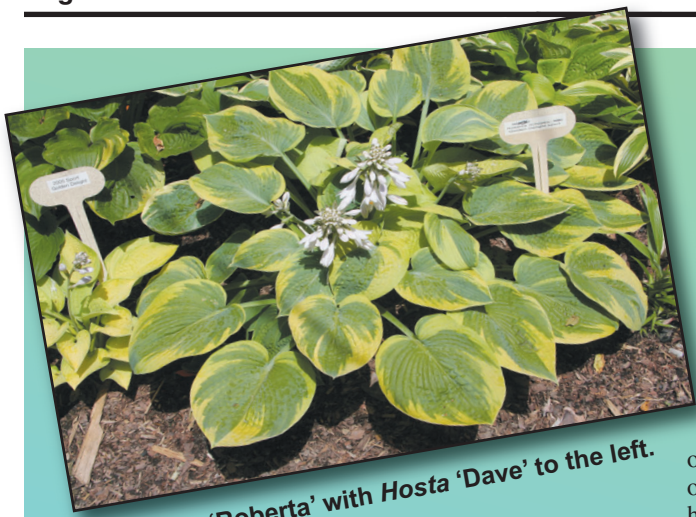
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Come Visit Us ...

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 15-16, April 22-23, April 29-30, May 6-7, May 13-14 from 9:00 to 5:00. We will also have our annual Memorial Day Festival, May 30th. Please note that we will be open on Monday only of that weekend this year. Please check our website for sale dates and directions to the new nursery in Franklinton. We will have a wide selection of our hostas available at very reasonable prices as well as ferns, conifers and maybe a few other surprises. Hope to see you soon.

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Hosta 'Roberta' with Hosta 'Dave' to the left.

Each year Green Hill Farm offers a special new hosta introduction exclusively to hosta clubs for their members. Our exclusive club hosta this year is really two hostas 'Dave' and 'Roberta', both sports of Bob Kuk's 'Golden Delight'. 'Roberta', the hosta, is somewhat available in the trade but to my knowledge this is the first offering of 'Dave'. 'Roberta' is a medium-sized hosta with a blue-green leaf center and a golden yellow edge while 'Dave' is smaller and bright yellow with a light green margin. They are two very different looks from 'Tokudama' heritage.

In this way we at Green Hill Farm are really honoring three great hosta folks. Dave and Roberta Chopko of Boonton, NJ have one of the best hosta collections in the country, with mature hosta clumps winding their way down a long expanse of ever shrinking lawn to the creek at the bottom of their garden. Dave loves his hostas and Roberta loves her ferns. Both collections have many unusual specimens all well grown in the perfect mix of sun and shade. Dave and Roberta are also the backbone of the Tristate Hosta Society and work tirelessly to insure it remains one of the top hosta clubs anywhere.

In a way we are also honoring the late Bob Kuk. Bob had an amazing garden of his own in Brecksville, OH and a hosta nursery that sold his introductions. Bob was also a good friend that loved to discuss hostas in depth with other serious collectors. He and Dave shared many hours of "hosta talk" as well as many plants. Bob, as was his tradition, named his two sports from his seedling 'Golden Delight' for his hosta friends Dave and Roberta Chopko.

'Dave' and 'Roberta' are our featured hostas in 2016

This usually gets us in a little trouble with some of our other customers, but we will not offer 'Dave' on any of our wholesale or retail lists and will reserve 'Roberta' for hosta clubs first. The only way that you can get 'Dave' this year is through your local hosta group. In this way, we hope to increase the membership of local hosta clubs.

Let me elaborate a little on that. We live in changing times where the social and educational organizations of the past, plant clubs and societies, are in competition for membership with the new social media of the Internet. While both offer hosta information, discussion, and even personal relationships to some degree, hosta clubs can offer "hands on" interaction with people and plants.

Have you ever noticed that the attendance is greatest at those hosta meetings where hostas are sold? When I give my lectures across the country, I like to flatter myself to think that all those hosta folks have come to hear me talk. In reality, they probably come just as much or more for the truck load of hostas that comes with me. The best way to attract new members and keep the ones you already have is to have a hosta plant sale. While as much as we like to say we are a "people" society, remember we are a hosta society first.

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

If auctions and raffles are good and hosta sales better, the best encouragement to join a hosta club and keep coming back is free hostas. Yes, absolutely free hostas. Door prizes are great. At my talks I like to donate a plant or two for door prizes. If they are given away at the end of the meeting, it keeps people in the seats. (Just kidding.) Some clubs also use free hostas as bribes to attend garden tours or rewards for a job well done for the society. We now have a free hosta every week at our local hosta sales at the nursery. You have to find it but it is absolutely free.

The point I guess I am trying to make is that I rarely see anyone leave a hosta meeting where there are plants available, free or otherwise, without one or two. Hosta folks love hostas!!! That is where our exclusive new hosta and our list of other recent introductions come in. These are plants that most all of your members have not yet acquired or are good plants for beginners and giveaways.

Other hostas this year include our own 'First Blush' PPAF, our first red-leaved hosta that caused such a stir last spring. 'Rough Knight', a rich green cupped cutie, 'Envy', an upright yellow-margined beauty, and 'Peticoat Junction', an interesting ruffled blue-green hosta are all from Doug Beilstein. 'Infatuation' is a unique blue *H. kikutii* hybrid with rich cranberry petioles. And yes, there are a few minis, too. 'Baby Booties' is back, along with 'Brentwood Blues', 'Giantland Mouse Cheese' and 'Lime Zest'. And please don't overlook the classics 'Satisfaction' and 'Sugar and Spice'. We are willing to work with you to make your next hosta sale a success, just let Nancy or Bob know how we can help. Remember, these hostas are pictured in Garden Club section of our website, www.HostaHosta.com.

Growing Minis

from the November 2010 Gossip Jr.

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

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

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

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

If you water your miniature hostas more often, then you must fertilize them more, also. Many sophisticated mini growers do not fertilize their minis at all, starving them into the smallest size possible. Then they wonder why they lose one every now and then. Little hostas need fertilizer too, es-

pecially a little bit of liquid fertilizer every few weeks during the growing season. I like using Miracle-Gro Tomato Food because of its added magnesium. In your good, well-drained soil, it should percolate down into the root zone quickly and thoroughly.

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

All this extra this and extra that is leading me to say that minis grown well need their own special place in the garden. Maybe you need a special bed of specially prepared soil with small rocks scattered about to moderate temperatures and retain moisture, (a rock garden?) You need somewhere safe from surface tree roots that can easily strangle them and steal their water and nutrients. Even somewhere safe from voles that can devour an entire mini in just one bite. Maybe minis are best grown in containers.

In a container, light, soil, water and fertilizer can all be completely controlled. Voles can be foiled and tree roots cut if they dare to penetrate the holes in the bottom of the pot. In the South, we love containers for all these reasons and for almost all of our hostas. We can, however, just leave them outside in the garden all winter without a care in the world. Northern gardeners cannot.

There is no need to send your minis south for the winter, however, they are easy to overwinter right in your back yard, or in your garage. If you choose to overwinter your hostas in a garden shed or in your garage, allow your hostas to freeze below 25 degrees two or three times and then bring them in. They should be moist at that time and there is no need to water them during the winter except to keep them from getting totally dry. You can put some snow on them occasionally, or a little water if it's not handy, to keep them from drying out. Make sure the dormant buds are well under ground when you bring them in and add mulch or gravel as necessary.

You can leave your minis outside, if the container can handle the freezing and thawing, by burying them in the



Nancy's minis on the bridge.

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

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

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