

The Green Hill Gossip

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Hosta hybridizing is hard!!!

It used to look so easy, but now it has gotten really hard and I do not mean the pollen pushing part of it. I have new glasses and everything is larger than life, including hosta flowers.

It is harder and harder now to create really new hostas. Forty years ago when Paul Aden was introducing hostas for himself and others, the bees were experts. The hostas that were available then were very limited and almost any improvement on the status quo was a winner. Everything was simpler in the 70's, (for me just getting out of the 60's made everything easier).

Hybridizing is about being first. It would be easy to create 'Blue Angel' again and maybe even a better form of it but "we've been there done that." No need to even try, it is a classic now and forever. Reproducing 'Sum and Substance,' that triploid anomaly, would be tougher, but why bother. I could go on and on. Think of all those blue and gold hostas that were so new in the 80's and look so much like your grandmother's quilts now. We demand more creativity in the new century, something that is really new and very different, maybe even weird.

I have been fortunate, I took a different tact years ago. I guess it is my nature, I want do something really special but in a new and different way. Further, I have an additional criterion for introducing hostas with which most hybridizers are not burdened. My hostas have to be appealing to a wide market. They have to make you say, "Wow!" After all this is how I send my kids to college.

We have lots of hosta hybridizers now and that is great, but I want them to raise the bar. Aim high; hostas will reward you, and certainly surprise you with the knowledge hidden in their genes. Our hosta friends want us to take them to the next genetic level; it is our joy and duty to do so. Hybridizers of old always kept their best "breeders" for themselves and their closest friends but I have always made my best plants available to everyone. We have strength in numbers; let's push this party forward together.

One more thing, if you do not grow seeds, please don't stop reading now. To be a discriminating hosta collector you have to develop your hosta appreciation skills. That begins with trying to see the wonderful qualities in a new hosta hybrid that the hybridizer saw and liked enough to name and introduce the plant. To do that well, we all have to understand a little about the thought process that creates great new hostas, be it genius or madness. It's like art or poetry, you might not like it all, but you can learn to appreciate the vision and the process.

So where do we go together from here? All the easy work has been done, not that occasionally something great won't pop up when we least expect it. It is time to get a little more "scientific." That does not mean we all need to take a graduate level course in genetics, fortunately, we really do not know enough



Hosta 'First Blush' PPAF

about hosta genetics for it to do us much good. But we do need to get a little more serious about setting goals and maybe trade your shotgun approach for a sniper rifle.

Here is how!!!

The simplest thing to do to become a better hybridizer who produces more interesting hostas is to "make the second cross." This is easy science. When you cross two very different hostas, like 'Tardiflora' and *H. sieboldiana*, the seedlings of the first generation (F1) all look pretty similar. The reason is simply all the dominate genes dominate all or most all the recessive genes. The leaf shapes are similar, the sizes are similar and the bloom times are now in the middle of summer, not June and September.

Eric Smith knew this 50 years ago and so he made the second cross. He crossed the first generation seedlings with each other. The result is that the recessive genes "fall out." The second generation seedlings (F2) will vary greatly in leaf shapes, (some round, some narrow), in size, (some large, some small), and the bloom times will again spread out from June to September. Smith's dream of producing small blue hostas for small English gardens was realized by just making the second cross. The surprise, and yes, there is usually a surprise when you make the second cross, was that the plants were bluer than the original blue parent.

Most of my success has been from this, making the second cross. My yellow hostas became more yellow and surprisingly also more red. When I did this I was careful to cross siblings with siblings because selfing does limit the gene pool significantly. I

also like to cross the "best" with the "best" whatever that means. So the first step in upping your hybridizing game is "making the second cross."

So if making the second cross is good, is making the third cross, of the second generation of seedlings (F3), better? Sometimes this type of line breeding is useful for the isolation of specific traits. Herb Benedict took Smith's crosses further through several generations, maybe as far as F6. The hostas did concentrate the blue color but they also got smaller and grew very slowly. At some point inbreeding takes over and too many recessive genes may make for an unacceptable loss of vigor.

In my experience, I get most everything I want from just the two crosses, F1 and F2. Third generation crosses do not push the red further into the leaf and in some cases it retreats. Different genetic combinations are probably needed to do that. So I usually stop at two and then cross to another line of F2 seedlings. So don't run on and on down a narrow alley, you may discover it is a dead end.

It is easy to cross hostas that bloom at the same time, especially the early flowering ones that are usually very fertile. The temptation is to grow thousands of those big fat, easy to germinate seeds and then start throwing them away as soon as the third leaf appears. Crossing hostas with diverse parentages however often produces small seeds that cling to their pods and have much lower germination and growth rates. That is the hosta hybridizing sea in which I swim and every seed is valuable to me. In fact, I get traumatized every time culling day appears on the calendar and I have to prepare my psyche for the mass murder that I am about to commit. I would keep them all if I could, well maybe not quite all.

The next step in producing better hostas is to learn that "more is less." Fewer crosses with a modest number of seeds each make more sense to me. You can keep more of these siblings longer making more F2 crosses but most importantly you can select for traits like flower color and fragrance that may take years to appear, selecting the best of the litter not just the last one standing.

So how many seeds do you need to grow to get a good representation of the gene pool of any given cross? One hundred is a nice round number but I have found that 50 do pretty well. In 50 siblings you start to get several that are almost too similar to tell apart as well as some really oddballs at the end of the bell curve. I grow all I have and in two or three years take up my murderous ways and cull a few every year until I am down to five or ten. That way I have plenty of plants to use as parents if I so chose since they often bloom over a period of a couple of months.

If we are going to make fewer crosses and keep our seedlings

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

My Official Invitation

by Nancy Solberg

I would like to happily invite everyone who is reading this newspaper to the 2015 American Hosta Society National Con-

vention. Lucky for me, it's in my own backyard. Unlucky for me, there is a lot of work to do! We will have three days full of hostas, all kinds of interesting plants, crazy plant people, and food. What a combo! Not to mention the leaf show and vending.

We have gone back to having buses take us on our tours. They are really sort of "buses on your own." We feel this is not only the green thing to do but it will also be much more relaxing than fighting our Raleigh traffic. It will also give you an opportunity to ride different buses each day so that you can make many more new friends than if you drove your car.

We start off with speakers and a scientific session on Thursday. Then it's dinner at Tony Avent's Plant Delights Nursery on Thursday night. Tour the large botanical gardens or purchase that colorful "tropical" plant you discover to put in front of that sunny window back home. Don't worry, he has hostas, too.

Friday garden tours include a nationally known moss garden, a large containerized hosta garden, and three other home gardens with a variety of interesting plants. Lunch will be at our very own North Carolina Farmer's

Market. Sample what's in season here in NC (maybe peaches, which are to die for, and corn) and buy some to take home. Not only is there great local produce at the market, there is also a large supply of plant material for sale.

On Saturday the buses will head to Green Hill Farm where you can shop your hosta heart out. Bob and Nancy's business is a hosta factory. There are no hosta gardens here but you can see the small vegetable garden and Nancy's potted plant collection (I'm liking sedums right now.) Then it's back to the hotel for lunch and the annual live auction. Saturday night's banquet will include the Alex J. Summers Award winner.

All of this comes with a large dose of seeing hosta friends, new and old alike. I'm hoping that Cody makes an appearance. My mom is coming out from Arizona to help make the breakfast bread that will be at the nursery on Saturday morning. So come on out to North Carolina on June 18-20th and let us take you "Back to the Future." Come see how we grow it down south!

The hotel is the Hilton Raleigh North/Midtown, located at 3415 Wake Forest Road, Raleigh, NC 27609; 919-872-2323. Special double room rate is \$105.00. Registration is \$230.00.

For more info go to www.2015ahsconvention.com or email Bob at HostaBob@gmail.com.



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

Rating the Gold-centered Hostas

by Bob Solberg

Editor's Note: This article graced the front page of the first Green Hill Gossip, published January 1996. I am reprinting it here again, (back to the future), in the 20th "Gossip" for those of you have been with us from the beginning and also those of you who had no idea that hostas could be so loveable back then. It is interesting; no matter how many things in Hostadom have changed, great hostas stand the test of time. You can also read where I was right and where I was wrong.

In reading this I was surprised to find my lack of enthusiasm for 'June,' the number one hosta on the list of most hosta folks, has very deep roots. Also note that there was a controversy at the time between using the terms sport and mutation in describing what happened in the garden vs what happened in the lab. And finally, that almost any hosta grows best in "morning light and afternoon shade."

The most sought after hostas today are the ones with leaves with gold centers. Hostas like 'Paul's Glory,' 'On Stage,' and 'Great Expectations' have moved up to the top of wish lists and popularity polls everywhere.

Last year at the nursery and in gardens across the country special attention was given to these gold-centered hostas and their performance throughout the growing season was particularly noted. The extreme heat in the Midwest, drought in the New Jersey area and the usual summer heat and humidity in the South provided good testing conditions for this group of hostas.

First, what are "gold-centered" hostas? There are actually two types of gold-centered hostas, gold hostas that have sported a green margin and green or blue hostas that have sported a gold center. 'September Sun' is 'August Moon' with a dark green margin while 'June' is 'Halcyon' with a gold center. This sporting or mutating of one layer of leaf tissue can occur in the garden or nursery but many of



Hosta 'Paradigm'

these mutations are the result of micro propagation in the tissue culture lab.

While these sports resemble their parents in every way except for leaf coloration, their size and growth habits may vary from their parents because of this change in leaf coloration. Generally, green-margined gold hostas, like 'September Sun,' tend to grow somewhat larger and with more vigor than their gold parents. In addition, because of the green leaf margin, the leaves tend not to burn as easily and the plants can be grown in more light than their parents and they withstand heat better.

Gold-centered hostas that have sported from solid-colored parents, like 'June' tend to be somewhat less vigorous than their parents and make smaller clumps. They may need additional light for good growth since they have less chlorophyll, but paradoxically they can usually

endure less heat than their parents because their lighter leaf may "burn out." Thus they grow best when given strong morning light and cool afternoon shade.

The following is a list of the most widely available gold-centered hostas currently in the trade with comments that should aid you in choosing just the right spot for them in your garden. Growing conditions vary widely across the country so use your own gardening good sense when selecting the hostas that will do best in your garden.

GREEN-MARGINED HOSTAS

'Dick Ward'/'Midwest Magic,' garden/TC mutation of 'Zounds' – 'Dick Ward' and 'Midwest Magic' show the same coloration, bright gold that holds well with a dark green

margin. 'Dick Ward' may have a little more puckering in the garden. If 'Zounds' grows well for you, then either of these will grow better!

'Emerald Tiara,' TC mutation of 'Golden Scepter' – Small rounded, dark green edge with a bright gold center. 'Golden Tiara' size, excellent vigor and rate of increase, color brightest in the spring and fades in the heat of summer, makes a great border.

'Emerald Scepter,' TC mutation of 'Golden Scepter' – Light green edge and lighter yellow center that 'Emerald Tiara.' About half the size of 'Emerald Tiara' and much less vigor, center will bleach to white in summer and "melt out" if not kept cool.

'Guacamole,' TC mutation of 'Fragrant Bouquet' – The cream margin of its parent is replaced with a dark green one, resulting in a more vigorous and sun tolerant hosta. Shiny foliage in the spring with good color, same large fragrant flowers as 'Fragrant Bouquet.' Vigorous grower and fast increaser.

'Inniswood,' garden mutation of 'Sun Glow' – Dark green margin and medium gold center that improves throughout the summer. Large and more vigorous than its parent but still slow. Grows largest in the North but does well in a wide range of garden conditions.

'Just So,' a seedling or mutation of 'Little Aurora' – Dark green margin and bright gold cupped and puckered center, from 'Tokudama' parentage so keep cool. Will go dormant in mid-summer and develop a secondary red spot fungus infection. Given morning light it will produce a second flush of foliage in August. Beautiful little hosta worth the extra care.

'September Sun,' garden sport of 'August Moon' – Large rounded medium gold leaves with a wide dark green margin. It held its leaf color best of all gold-centered hostas last year. Needs some afternoon shade to keep it cool, red spot fungus infection occasionally a problem in droughts. Great performer.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Voles, again!

from the November 2012 "Gossip Jr."

In my travels this fall the number one topic of discussion, the one that brought the most questions, was not, "How is the red hosta coming?" Folks were more worried about keeping the hostas they have rather than dreaming of the rosy future of Hostadom. You might think deer, public enemy number one for hostas, might be a hot topic but it seems most of you have come to terms with those large four footed herbivores in one way or another and now worry much more about an unseen menace, voles.

In the past I have written a lot about our personal year-round war that needs to be waged against voles. Yes, we like poisoning them by sending them presents of baited goodies down their fresh holes, covering them with large rocks to keep the opossums at bay. I blow all the leaves, seems like a foot of them this year, out of the garden to eliminate winter housing and keep an eye out all winter for any new invasions. It sounds simple but if you have not started the fight yet this fall, you need to do a little recon and then use a little d-CON®.

This time I wish to borrow liberally from a pamphlet, with proper credit of course, that I picked up at the Agricultural Extension Office a couple of years ago while giving a talk to a garden club in their meeting room. (Emphasis will be mine). It was written by John M. O'Brien from of all places the Nevada Department of Agriculture for The Cooperative Extension Division, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Animal Damage Control, and Great Plains Agriculture Council, Wildlife Committee. This is vole science at its

best, seriously, as they can be a major economic pest. For example, "Populations of 1,700 voles per acre... in Washington State apple orchards decreased production by 35%... \$3036.00 per acre." "The worst vole outbreak in the United States probably occurred in Nevada in 1908 and 1909. Ten thousand acres of alfalfa were completely destroyed. Vole populations were estimated at 25,000 per acre." (See, things could be worse!)

"Identification: Voles, also called meadow mice or field mice, belong to the genus Microtus... There are 23 species in the United States." If you live in the Midwest you may have the Prairie Vole or the Meadow Vole, the latter having a more northern range and enjoying moister habitats, hosta gardens. In New England you too may have the Meadow Vole. The Pine Vole is common throughout the eastern US and is a forest dweller that likes heavy ground cover, leaves."

"Food Habits: Voles eat a variety of plants, most frequently grasses and forbs (hostas). In late summer and fall, they store seeds, tubers, bulbs, and rhizomes (hostas). They eat bark at times, primarily in the fall, and winter, (when they do not have hostas to eat), and will eat crops, especially when their populations are high. Occasional food items include snails, (Yea!!!) insects and animal remains."

"General Biology, Reproduction and Behavior: Voles are active day and night, year-round (scary). Home range is usually ¼ acre or less... Voles are semifossorial and construct many tunnels and surface runways with numerous burrow entrances. A single burrow system may contain several adults and young."

"Voles may breed throughout the year (Oh Boy!) but most commonly in the spring and summer. In the field they have 1-5 litters per year. They have produced up to 17 litters per year in a laboratory (or hosta garden). Litter sizes range from 1 to 11 but usually average (just) 3 to 6. The gestation period is about 21 days. Young are weaned by the time they are 21 days old (and actively eating your hostas), and females mature in 35 to 40 days. Lifespans are short, probably ranging from 2 to 16 months (or less in my garden). Large population fluctuations are characteristic of voles. Population

levels generally peak every 2 to 5 years, however these cycles are not predictable."

"Many voles are excellent swimmers... The climbing ability varies... the pine vole is a bit clumsy in this regard. Voles are the prey for many predators (for example, coyotes, snakes, hawks, owls, and weasels), (and cats) however, predators do not normally control vole populations."

"Damage Prevention and Control Methods: Exclusion Hardware ... cloth cylinders exclude voles from seedlings and young trees (hostas). The mesh should be ¼ inch or less in size. Bury the wire 6 inches to keep voles from burrowing under the cylinder." (You may want to bury the cylinder deeper if your amended soil is very loose or sandy.)

Cultural Methods and Habitat Modification ... "Eliminate weeds, ground cover, (leaves) and litter in and around crops, lawns, and cultivated areas (hosta gardens) to reduce the capacity of these areas to support voles. Lawns and turf should be mowed regularly." (Mulch should also be minimal, no deep 6" mulches!)

Frightening ... "Frightening agents are not effective in reducing vole damage."

Repellants ... "Repellants utilizing thiram (also a fungicide) or capsaicin (the "hot" in chilies) as an active ingredient are registered for meadow voles... These products (or repellants registered for other species) may afford short-term protection, but this has not been demonstrated."

Toxicants "Zinc phosphide ... is a single dose toxicant available in pelleted and grain bait formulations and as a concentrate. Zinc phosphide baits are generally broadcast or placed by hand in runways and burrow openings... Zinc phosphide baits are potentially hazardous to ground feeding birds, especially waterfowl. Placing bait into burrow openings may reduce this hazard."

"Anticoagulant baits ... are slow acting toxicants requiring 5 to 15 days to take effect. Multiple feedings are necessary for most anticoagulants to be effective... In addition to broadcast or hand placement, anticoagulant baits can also be placed in various types of bait containers. Water repellent paper tubes with anticoagulant baits glued to the inside surface make effective, disposable contain-

ers. (S-shaped PVC pipes are a more permanent container) Bait containers protect bait from moisture and reduce the likelihood of nontarget animals (pets) and small children consuming bait."

Fumigants "Fumigants are not usually effective because the complexity and shallowness of vole burrow systems allow the fumigant to escape."

Trapping ... "Mouse snap traps can be used to control a small population of voles By placing the trap perpendicular to the runway with the trigger end in the runway. A peanut butter-oatmeal mixture or apple slices make good baits. (I place the trap under a clay pot to give the voles some cover and keep "nontarget" animals from carrying away the traps.) Fall and late winter are periods when many vole species are easiest to trap."

Shooting ... "Shooting is not practical or effective in controlling voles." (This is a quote, really.)

This is a very comprehensive pamphlet and I really have little to add, maybe just one more idea. One advantage to growing hostas "pot in pot" is vole control. This is a simple concept. Plant your hosta in an appropriate-sized nursery pot, little ones in quarts, and giants in 3 gallons. Then, sink a similar pot into the ground leaving it two inches above the ground. Then drop your potted hosta into the sunken pot, pot in a pot. The rim of the pots above the ground will serve as a vole barrier. Remember to remove all the "ground cover" from around the pots so you do not provide any ramps for the voles to run into your pots.

Hostas in pots above ground make good deterrents to voles also especially if you place the pot on a piece of slate or bricks to seal the bottom hole. Putting gravel or hardware cloth over the holes in the pot will help, too. Remember voles do not climb but they will burrow through the holes of a pot if you let them.

One more thing, the time is now, in early fall, to start baiting and trapping. Keep it up until the ground freezes and then begin right after the thaw. In the South, that means we fight voles all winter or lose a row of our biggest hostas to the 3 to 4 generations of voles that have had the best of holiday feasts, hostas.

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RATING GOLD-CENTERED HOSTAS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

BLUE AND GREEN HOSTAS WITH GOLD CENTERS

'Bright Lights,' possibly the reverse of 'Tokudama Flavocircinalis' – Blue, somewhat pointed leaves with a bright gold center, great color. Best grower of the 'Tokudama' types but still prefers



cool summers and will go heat dormant.

'Blue Shadows'/'Tokudama Aureonebulosa,' 'Blue Shadows' is a selection of 'Tokudama Aureonebulosa,' the latter originated in Japan – Beautiful cupped leaves with a greenish-gold center and relatively narrow rim of blue that broadens as the plant ages. Both are smaller and weaker than 'Bright Lights' and will rot in hot dry summers. Needs morning light but must be kept cool and moist in summer.

'Color Glory'/'Dupage Delight'/'Super Nova,' similar mutations of 'Frances Williams'/'Aurora Borealis' – Round blue-green leaves with a large gold center, the reverse of 'Frances Williams.' Very similar to parent including the spring burning of the gold portion of the leaf. Leaves must be kept wet on cold, clear, breezy spring days when the humidity is very low to lessen spring burn. Will go heat dormant and rot in long periods of drought.

'Gold Standard,' garden sport of a 'Fortunei' – Large heart-shaped leaves that emerge all green but rapidly develop a bright gold center. An excellent grower especially in part sun. Leaf centers will bleach to white if not shaded in the summer. Plant will defoliate and develop a black spot fungus if placed in too much light. Excellent garden plant.

'Great Expectations,' garden sport of *H. sieboldiana* 'Elegans' – Medium round blue-green leaves with a bright gold center that will bleach to white in summer. Needs morning light but will "melt out" in summer if not kept cool. Has a tendency to rot in summer heat and not return the next spring. Very slow to

increase. Takes extra care but its great coloration is worth it.

'Hoosier Harmony,' TC mutation of 'Royal Standard' – Large, medium shiny green leaf with a bright yellow center that appears translucent. Fast grower that will take more light than most hostas without the leaf center bleaching out. White fragrant flowers identical to parent. Not slug resistant.

'Janet,' a garden sport of a 'Fortunei' – A smaller plant than 'Gold Standard' but leaves tend to be brighter in the spring. He gold center bleaches to white easily and will "melt out" and defoliate by mid-summer if grown in too much light. Good color but must be grown in the shade.

'June,' TC mutation of 'Halcyon' – Pointed blue leaves with a gold center that is brightest in the spring and fade some by fall. Tends to produce all its foliage for the year in the spring and should be encouraged with extra nitrogen while it is making leaves. Smaller than its parent, it too is a shade lover.

'On Stage'/'Choko Nishiki,' Japanese sport of *H. montana* – Large pointed dark green leaves with a bright gold center that fades almost to green by fall. Makes a large impressive clump in the North and also grows well in the South. The color is spectacular in the spring but often disappointing by late summer.



Hosta 'Paul's Glory'

'Paul's Glory,' nursery mutation of Paul Hofer – Large pointed dark blue-green leaves with a gold center that brightens as the year progresses. Fast growing and well suited to all gardens. Leaf center will bleach to white and "melt out" if not given enough shade and water. Beautiful hosta.

'Rascal,' nursery mutation of 'Gold Regal' – Upright chartreuse leaves with a large yellow center. Best if given some morning sun and afternoon shade and kept wet and cool in summer. Will go heat dormant in late August in the heat and drought. Good color in June when the scapes begin to emerge and flower.

Heirloom Hostas

from the November 2014 "Gossip Jr"

Like I said, Nancy and I are really into vegetable gardening. We are revisiting our roots of gardening and filling our meals with great fresh, pesticide free produce at the same time. It's exciting pulling your first carrots and very satisfying when they become part of a new recipe.

Being hosta collectors we have taken a similar approach to our vegetable garden. Nancy grew 24 different cultivars of tomatoes this year one plant of each, except for one which she bought twice because she did not have her list with her at the farmer's market. Sound familiar? Now she keeps her list in her smart phone!

So as collectors we have found that most of the diversity in vegetables comes not from hundreds of new cultivars introduced every year, like hostas, but the reintroduction of heirloom varieties. We grew a variety of squash from the 17th century that was thin skinned and very tender. Like most heirlooms it also had an undesirable trait, in this case low yields, but I am not sure that is all bad when it comes to zucchini.

All this got me thinking about heirloom hostas. Most of us "serious" hosta folks always want to know what's new. For me that is unnamed seedlings in a hybridizer's garden. For long time collectors it is the plants we are offering in the nursery this year; but for folks new to hostas almost any hosta is new to them except the one that came with their new house. As with vegetables, to them old hostas may be just as interesting as the newest introductions.

In my search for heirloom hostas, I went back to our old hosta lists from the 1980's, almost 30 years ago, believe it or not. I chose 20 hostas that would have been found in any good hosta collection at that time, were reasonably inexpensive, and were rugged performers in the garden. There were blue ones, gold ones, green ones and variegated ones. There were all sizes from large to minis. It's a pretty good diversity. Some of these plants have not been surpassed, although most hosta snobs like me do look down our noses at them. In any case they would still make a good beginning for a collection, after all it was how we long time hosta growers all fell in love with hostas in the first place.

So, here is the annotated list. Like I said most heirloom vegetables have some flaws and that is why we generally grow the new hybrids. These hostas each have a tragic flaw also as you will see, but even with these flaws, they are all still worthy of a place in your garden.

'Allan P. McConnell' This small flat hosta made the perfect border, when hosta gardeners bordered their beds. It multiplied quickly and could be divided every year or two, extending those borders. It has a very neat appearance but, here's the flaw, the white margin is often very narrow so that the plant looks more green than white. I met the real person Allan P. McConnell once and that will always make this little hosta special to me.

'Antioch' In contrast, this large hosta has a very showy white margin. It is one of the 'Fortunei' clan and we still find huge old clumps of it in some of the older hosta collections. It however does lack substance and can begin to look more than a little tired in late summer after the light lavender blooms have faded. It is a hosta that Peter Ruh championed long ago and is still special in the bright spring sunshine.

'August Moon' Discovered by Alex Summers in R. Langfelder's Long Island garden, it was the best of the early gold hostas. Its large size, bright color, and attractive flowers still make it a superstar in the garden. It was a gold hosta that stayed gold in an age when most did not. Although it has now been surpassed by its many sports including my own 'September Sun,' its only real flaw is its lack of tolerance for the hot dry summers of the South.

'Blue Cadet' This was a hot plant in 1982. Small blue hostas were as rare then as blue minis are today. Fortunately, 'Blue Cadet' is a fast multiplier and hosta nurseries were able to propagate it quickly. Its good substance and pretty heart-shaped leaves form very neat, full clumps with nice flowers in June. It will even rebloom here in September if divided in mid-summer. If only it were a little more blue.

'Chartreuse Wiggles' This is a cute little hosta with very narrow chartreuse leaves that are highly ruffled especially if grown in some sun. It was a mini before minis were the rage. It did have a mind of its own however and wanted to wander around the garden forming mats not clumps, not wanting to be divided. It also is not a big fan of deep shade, or dry shade for that matter, and thought by some to be a little delicate. I still see some very nice "mats" of it every now and then.

'Elegans' For many, this is what a hosta should look like, large round cupped and puckered leaves, blue-green in color. Introduced in 1905 as *Funkia fortunei* var. *robusta* by Arends Nursery in Germany it was propagated by seed and division until the advent of tissue culture. Many forms exist, all variations on the

same theme, in several shades of blue-green. I just wish it grew and multiplied faster, although it is a great improvement over its 'Tokudama' parent.

'Francee' I wish I had hybridized this hosta. It is perfect in so many ways. The pure white margins on the deep green leaves are neatly arranged to form a large somewhat flat clump. Its growth rate is good and it has the typical 'Fortunei' flowers. Unfortunately it has become overshadowed by its showier tetraploid forms, 'Patriot' and 'Minuteman' but it still can be found in a home improvement store near you.

'Frances Williams' For years, this was the most popular hosta in the world. It is 'Elegans' with a broad gold margin. In fact, it was so popular that many look-alikes with slight differences were also named. Then one day, after years of never really noticing, we discovered that those gold margins develop a brown rust color if they become desiccated in the spring and that was the end of that. That is until you see a fine old clump in a garden and realize there is really no other hosta quite like it.

'Gold Edger' I am sure Paul Aden wishes he had named this hosta 'Gold Cadet' but he had already used the name on some now unknown plant. 'Gold Edger' is the perfect match for 'Blue Cadet, and hosta crazies have even grown the two plants together in the same clump, a sort of variegation by mixing foliage colors. It is a fine hosta and I once had an "edge" of it along the curve of a hosta bed but by late summer it might be confused with "Green Edger," its chartreuse color being very close to green.

'Gold Standard' Once thought to be one of the best hostas ever, this 'Fortunei' always looked a little washed out to me even early in the spring. I know this is sacrilege, but the yellow center was always a little too green or a little too white. It is a different plant wherever you plant it. I know for some this is magical, but I am not a fan. It would still be a standard in the trade except that most all the field grown stock became infected with Hosta Virus X. Being difficult to tissue culture, think of all the sports including 'Striptease,' it may not be economical to propagate it in the future.

'Golden Tiara' The best thing about this hosta is how fast it grows. The second best thing is how fast it sports. In its day it was a tremendous breakthrough, a small gold-edged hosta unlike any hosta we had ever seen. But its lack of substance caught up with its popularity. The slugs do love it as well as foliar nematodes. Both will defoliate the poor plant. I still admire it for what it is, and overlook its faults.

'Kabitan' This hosta presumably discovered in the wilds of Japan must have been

one of those once in a lifetime finds. Used widely as borders in Northern gardens, its delicate arching form and bright purple flowers bring a softness to the edges of the landscape. It does lack substance but it would not be as charming if its leaves were rigid, would it? We learned from it that a green margin on a yellow leaf will keep the edge from burning. But in too much sun however, it will not prevent the leaf center from turning white and melting away. Green or blue-margined yellow-leaved hostas have since become the most popular of all because of their color combinations and their performance in the garden.

'Krossa Regal' Yes, hostas can be very upright and we like that too. Hosta clumps usually provide a horizontal line in the garden but this hosta gives us a lot of verticality. Still a very popular hosta and available in the trade it originally hails from Japan and was obtained by Gus Krossa and later named for him. It has a lovely gray-green color that some days I wish were more blue and somewhat unmanageable scapes. It also hates to be divided and will sulk for a year or two before standing tall again. Its sport, 'Regal Splendor' is equally upright but with a flash of white on the margin.

'Halcyon' Eric Smith wanted to shrink 'Elegans' into small hostas for the small English gardens. It took him two generations to accomplish this with hostas like 'Blue Moon' and 'Dorset Blue.' 'Halcyon' is from the first generation of Smith's "Tardianas" and fortunately it escaped the compost pile. It is just a great garden plant! It is just blue enough not to quibble and grows well almost any place you put it. It has now been overshadowed by its sports, 'June,' 'First Frost,' and the rest but should always be available if only as an off-type of the production of its children.

'Lemon Lime' This hosta is lemon in spring and lime in summer. I like it better as lemon than lime. In any case it makes a small flat mound that grows incredibly fast. I have divided it three times in one year. Another breakthrough from Bob Savory it is a very unique hosta with the deep purple flowers that Bob liked so much. Its sports, especially 'Twist of Lime' and 'Lemon Frost' grow equally as well and again are much showier in the spring than in summer. It is used these days more as a mini in containers than the border maker of the last century.

***H. montana* 'Aureo-marginata'** I love this hosta and I hate it. We all love its beauty but I hate it because it will not grow in the South. It emerges too early and freezes and then as it tries to recover suffers in our late spring hot spells. It is a short season hosta with very short dormancy requirements. It must be in a hurry to produce seeds in whatever corner

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

HOSTA HYBRIDIZING IS HARD, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

longer than we must make better crosses. This is step three. Deciding what to cross is the artistic part of hosta hybridizing, but just like creating a painting it starts with vision. Somewhere in the mind's eye of any artist is a picture of what the finished product will look like. In hybridizing we call it a goal, a combination of traits, but I still can see the finished hosta in my dreams.

So do you want to do something different or repeat the past? There is nothing wrong with either. They never change the recipe for Ritz Crackers; they just make the box smaller and the price higher. To create hostas that remind us of our long time favorites, believe it or not, is actually a good marketing strategy. We all think of *H. sieboldiana* 'Elegans' as the prototypical large blue hosta. We all love it. Add a few more puckers, a darker blue color, a little more substance and a better name and you have the wildly popular 'Blueberry Waffles.' It is a similar product in a different box at a higher price. Success!

All the work now being done to create really giant hostas is just a variation on this theme. All the large hosta species are actually very closely related. They overlap in their bloom times and produce many seeds in each pod and many pods on each scape. It could become tempting to grow thousands of seedlings looking for that new great giant if you had the space and time. But before you do, stop, take a deep breath, close your eyes, and envision 'Empress Wu.' Now how will your empress be an improvement on the reigning queen?

Let's start with the biggest hostas we have that have a variety of different traits. We want them to be as different as possible, not all very similar. Let's mix together, a blue *H. montana* like 'Blue Angel' for color, size and flowers, a shiny *H. nigrescens* like 'Elatior' for its height, upright habit and large leaves, and a puckered, blue *H. sieboldiana*, you pick your favorite. Maybe add in a little *H. fluctuans* in the form of 'Sagae' somewhere along the way for its wavy leaves and you have mixed the genes of most all the largest hosta species.

The idea is to mix all the genes together and then, say it with me, "Make the second cross." I might cross 'Blue Angel' and 'Elatior,' and then make the F2 cross, and cross my blue *H. sieboldiana* and 'Sagae,' and make that F2 cross also. Then cross the two F2 lines together and see what falls out. I think something very good will, especially if you grow lots of seeds of this one cross, but only this one. You can make the F2 cross of these seedlings from the combined lines if you like, but you will get a much higher percentage of smaller plants with this cross than in the F1 cross.

So we've made 5 crosses and combined all the large genes from all the large hosta species. Along the way, we have selected seedlings to use in our crosses that have interesting leaf shapes and accessories, like ruffles and puckers. The 5 crosses will take only three generations however, since the two initial lines are formed at the

same time. I estimate 3 years per generation for the slow way I do things but many of you can probably do this in much less time.

Hopefully, your giant hosta vision will be fulfilled. If not you might be surprised to find something of which you could have never dreamed. In any case, you should have some excellent plants that with a good name and a little marketing will prove to become very popular. I will leave this dream for you to chase, like I said, the hosta I envision is new and very different.

So how do we attempt to create something "very different?" Crossing everything with everything, unusual combinations, minis with giants, who knows, that might work, and it does. It is a little bit too much of a shot in the dark for me however. Remember, I see my new hosta then try to reach that goal. Here, I underscore the word, goal. It may seem ironic that I would have a plan to produce a hosta that I cannot fully visualize, but for me that's the best way to get there.

The easiest thing for us to do to create a "new" type of hosta is to cross two hostas that normally do not bloom together. This is what Eric Smith did with his "Tardianas," so it is not a new idea but it is still a useful idea. How about mixing species like *H. venusta*, in the form of 'Tiny Tears,' with *H. sieboldii* 'Kabitan?' Try imagining what these small hosta seedlings might resemble. This hosta dream might become very weird and out of control, maybe even approaching a nightmare. In any case, you might get some very marketable yellow hostas, after you, say it again, "Make the second cross."

Unfortunately, 'Tiny Tears' and 'Kabitan' do not bloom at the same time. That is why we do not have hundreds of their children running the streets of Hostadom. We can get them to bloom together by getting 'Tiny Tears' to re-bloom or maybe force 'Kabitan' to emerge in February but that is still chancy. You can also save pollen from 'Tiny Tears' in June to use on 'Kabitan' in August. I will not go into all the ways to save pollen here, freezing it, for example, but it is being widely done.

What can we generally expect from these wide species crosses that normally do not bloom at the same time? First, lower fertility. The number of pods that set seed will be fewer and often the seeds are small, with little nutrition for their emerging seedlings. Thus, the seedlings will be small and take longer to get up to mature size, maybe a year longer. The plants themselves will be smaller ultimately, also. Think of the "Tardianas" they are all smaller than *H. sieboldiana*. Actually a lot will be medium-sized which happens to be the least exciting size for marketing hostas. Hosta folks want their hostas very big or very small. Remember, hosta hybridizing is hard!

A lot of your seedlings from these first F1 crosses will look, well different. They will not have the usual round or heart-shaped leaves but leaves that are irregularly shaped. They will not be contorted and weird enough to be interesting but rather just messy looking enough to not have that elegant look that our favorite hostas have. They may look more like hostas in the wild, more species-like. In a word they will be unat-



Hosta 'Sourpuss'

tractive, but do not throw them out, "make the second cross."

Eventually, the results of these wide crosses are seedlings that all tend to bloom in mid-summer. There will be no need to save pollen any longer, but you will still have to fight through those hot July days when hostas refuse to set seed. Your seed production will go down further but you will have some very different seedlings that may just have enough character to introduce.

Some hybridizers including myself have had the long term goal to collect the genes from all the hosta species and put them into a single plant. It would be the ultimate hosta gene pool and I believe someone someday will have a group of seedlings with this very large combination of traits. I have not followed this dream to its conclusion. I woke up to the realization that there are some genes in some species that I do not want in my seedlings. *H. hypoleuca* is one species I try to avoid, while others love it.

A good goal is to try to select for two or three traits at the same time, maybe more. In the lines that created 'Smiley Face,' 'Mango Salsa' and 'Peach Salsa,' I selected for better yellow color, strong red color in the leaf petioles and blades, substance, and diverse leaf shapes. I planned the individual crosses so that sibling seedlings with the best of these traits were crossed with each other but also made sure the leaf shapes and plant habits remained different in each of the two parents. Consolidate the traits you want most but try to do that in a variety of plant sizes and leaf shapes.

In addition, in my opinion hybridizing for variegation is the last step in producing a great variegated hosta, not the first!!! Create an interesting group of solid colored seedlings and then use their pollen on your variegated breeders to make beautiful variegated hostas. I know to do this well, you need in your hybridizing tool kit several streaked seedlings with various leaf

types so that you can add variegation without altering the new leaf traits that you have spent so much work creating. You may also need to save pollen at this stage again to make just the right cross.

Any streaked breeder will bring its own set of concentrated genes that will either originate from usually *H. sieboldii*, 'Beatrice,' or *H. sieboldiana*, 'Dorothy Benedict.' Here too, you may have to "make the second cross" to minimize their effects and retain the look of the original solid color seedling. Funny it seems that to get to the goal, there is always "just one more cross" needed. You see, hosta hybridizing is hard.

Finally, once you get far enough down the breeding lines that you have been creating, suddenly, you have no idea what will happen next. That is when hybridizing is easy again! Almost any cross that you can make and will set seeds, will now give you something new and different. Not all these seedlings will be winners but they will lead you to the next goal, your next hosta vision, and your next cross.

I am not especially clever or knowledgeable about what I am doing, although I did take a genetics course in graduate school, but I am stubborn. If I have a goal I want to get there. But like I said before we know so little about hosta genetics really that so much of what we learn is by trial and error. And our hostas never fail us; they lead me down new paths with every cross and I usually end up somewhere I never expected.

I know that genetics is "random" so if you produce interesting hostas either you are lucky or have God on your side. You can claim the vision, the dream, but plants are gifts. That is one reason I hate to throw any seedling away, each is special in its own way, if not marketable. Hosta hybridizing is fun, and the techniques are relatively simple, but boy, sometimes hosta hybridizing is hard.

HEIRLOOM HOSTAS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

of Japan that produced it. In Northern gardens it is flawless and a favorite of many.

'**Piedmont Gold**' I do not know why we stopped selling this hosta. It is a great large yellow, not chartreuse, hosta. It may bleach to white in too much sun or emerge a little early but I can grow it just fine. It is the product of Piedmont Gardens and David Stone in the piedmont of Connecticut. It too has many sports in the trade now of which I like 'Summer Serenade' best.

'**Royal Standard**' This hosta is a great improvement on its parent *H. plantaginea*. It is upright, has more substance, better green color and a longer bloom time of near white, albeit somewhat smaller, fragrant flowers. It does burn some if it is excessively hot and dry but grows better than its parent. The deer love it as do the slugs but all that is manageable, too. Introduced by Wayside Gardens in 1964 as the first patented hosta, it is a little plain in today's gardens but those fragrant flowers in August are more than worth a little loss of color along one of your garden walks.

'**Shade Fanfare**' This hosta was the first really expensive one I received as a gift. It was

labeled 'Flamboyant,' a finicky streaked hosta named by Paul Aden and one of the first group of hostas sold by Klehm Nursery. I soon learned, as did many of us hosta collectors that streaked hostas can go to sleep streaked and wake up with nothing but a variegated margin. It created a whole debate on the stability in hostas and for years streaked hostas were not stable enough to have registered names. Of course now that has all changed and we are up to our armpits in named streaked hostas. 'Shade Fanfare' as it turns out is a different color combination, the green is different. It is very dependable in the garden and distinct enough to identify easily from a distance. It never was as pretty as that streaked version, but I guess that is not its fault.

'**Undulata Albomarginata**' You must think I have lost my mind, an 'Undulata?' Why not? It is the most sun tolerant variegated hosta I know, and we all know it grows like a weed. Yes, the foliage often looks ratty in the July heat but cut it down and it will sprout a new set of leaves for fall. It is also white, pure white, pretty rare in hostas if you think about it. It could use more substance. Its floppy scapes have convinced gardeners that all hosta flowers need to be removed as soon as they appear but also that they can divide any hosta at any time of the year and that they really should do it regularly. All in all, it is really not

a bad plant, just an old plant. I bet your neighbor will give you a piece to get you started again

It's a pretty good list. Sometimes I think we forget how revolutionary a hosta like 'Golden Tiara' or 'Lemon Lime' really was back then, and really still today.

Okay, so in this tissue culture driven hosta world, how do you find these heirloom hostas? And how do you make sure they are pest and disease free? Unfortunately, it is almost impossible for nurseries these days to procure these hostas unless they have been propagated by division in the field either in this country or "across the pond." Most are not in tissue culture any more. That does not mean that you cannot buy disease and pest free divisions of these hostas, it just creates an air of doubt. So, just know this up front.

Heirloom vegetables of course are grown from seed and seed is usually disease and pest free. The heirloom hostas above however do not come true from seed, unfortunately, with maybe the exception of 'Elegans,' a seed strain cultivar. So this complicates things a little, but we actually have a couple of true heirlooms that we can grow from seed.

H. ventricosa is a true heirloom from seed. Since the seeds are produced by an asexual process, apomixis, all the seedlings produced are identical and there are lots of seeds

produced. *H. ventricosa* is a large velvety green hosta that is best known for its straight scapes filled with dark purple bell-shaped flowers. I think it makes a great groundcover under large trees or at the edge of the woods. Let the seeds ripen and fall, and the mass of plants will thicken year after year. The seeds make great gifts for gardeners in historic districts, too.

Another historic hosta that can be grown from seed as an heirloom is *H. plantaginea*, the old August Lily. Although, its seeds are produced in a normal way through sexual reproduction which will lead to some genetic variability, almost all the seeds are selfed since the flowers open and are pollinated at night when other hosta flowers are closed. Seedlings of *H. plantaginea* fall into a fairly narrow range, all maintaining those huge, pure white fragrant flowers. I like to grow this heirloom in a container near the house so I can enjoy its wonderful fragrance on warm late summer evenings.

I know hostas have become not only much more diverse in the past twenty years but also much more flashy. Color is the first, and maybe last, thing that catches a hosta collector's eye. Sometimes however, looking back at our hosta roots can remind us of where we have been and that the good old days really were pretty good.

The Local Gossip 2015

Twenty years of "Gossip"

This marks the 20th year that I have been publishing my thoughts on the latest hosta topics in this little newspaper, "The Green Hill Gossip." The "Gossip," as we like to call it, started out as an inexpensive way to print a color catalogue in a very readable form. Like you, my mailbox would fill up with hosta catalogues after the first of each year. Most of them were really lists and I would start at A and try to make it to Z. I wanted to print something that was hard to put down.

Over the last two decades articles have ranged from "Rating the gold-centered hostas," which is reprinted here, to advice on how to grow and hybridize hostas. But there has been more than tips and facts, there have been opinions. There have been comments on the state of Hostadom, on the mystic connection we all feel with hostas, and ties we share with each other. The "Gossip" has become more than a plant catalogue, it is an invitation to be part of the fun of living with hostas.

Many of the articles in the "Gossip" have found their way into hosta club newsletters and even *The Hosta Journal*. The "Hosta Calendar" has probably been the most widely reprinted article throughout the hosta world, but "The Top Ten Hosta Events of the 20th Century" and its companion article "The Top Ten Hostas of the Millennium" were solicited by a wide range of nursery trade and horticultural publications.

Many of you that enjoy my writing ask, "Why don't you write a book." I guess the easiest answer is, "Because I am in the newspaper business!" It has been a blast, thanks for all your support. Now for the juicy stuff...

The legend of

Hosta 'First Blush' PPAF

It has been a fun ride so far, well, mostly. On January 14th, 2015 Green Hill Farm introduced our first red-leafed hosta, 'First Blush' PPAF. The phone started ringing with orders within the first minute



Hosta 'Evening Blush' and its flower

of the emails being sent. Then Facebook blew up. Evidently hosta folks know a great new hosta when they see one.

Its story all started with 'Beet Salad.' 'Beet Salad' is a unique relative to 'Mango Salsa.' It is just a green hosta with red petioles, but has a little red edge that most folks would have never suspected was something special. Really just the vein that surrounds the leaf is red but it was the culmination of 25 years of hybridizing. I hoped that that little bit of red in a new and different leaf location might be inheritable.

As soon as I could I took the pollen from 'Beet Salad' and put it on my best 48/49 seedling. I joked that this was the "cross of the century" because it combined my red hosta line with my purple hosta line. (By the way, I claim almost every year to have made the cross of the century, but it is a long century you know and we are only at the beginning.) The result was a small group of similar looking green seedlings, nothing to freak out about. The plants did have blood red petioles intermediate between the two parents and an intermediate green leaf color. That was 2010.

I grow all my seedlings in containers in a special hoop house away from the hostas that we sell. They are protected from the bees and I can move them around as necessary to facilitate making crosses. Every day in the spring as the seedlings are emerging and growing rapidly, I sneak off and visit them until Nancy notices that I have disappeared and comes to bring me back to the task of the day. That next spring I was excited to find that two of the seedlings from my "cross of the century" had a 'Beet Salad' red edge. The red edge was inheritable!!! By April 8th, the red edge on one of the seedlings was very noticeable, much wider than the one vein thin 'Beet Salad' edge. It was inheritable and better. Life was good.

In the next ten days the magic began to happen. It was all so unexpected; I was not even sure whether I could trust my own eyes. Now many of my seedlings over the years have had red pigment on the tips of the leaves in the veins but also between the veins. It would last a week or so and then disappear. I do have a sibling to 'Mango Salsa' that has red leaf tips that persist until the real heat of summer, but nothing spectacular. I even had a seedling that has lots of red on the back of the leaves for almost a week in spring but it is soon gone.

So what I saw that day in the second week of April was unbelievable, literally. My seedling with the best red edge was starting to blush red between the veins in the leaf tissue, from the tip of the leaf down toward the leaf base. Every day it progressed further until it filled most of the first set of leaves. It was a red-leafed hosta, something I once said in public that we might never see. The red was on the top of the leaf this time, where you want it, and there

was none on the back of the leaf.

The first day I noticed the red, I took the plant home with me to show it to Nancy. I still wasn't sure that it was real.

That spring the leaves stayed red until I left for the National Convention well into June but had lost their blush by the time I returned on June 19th. There was still a hint of the red edge most all summer and of course the petioles stayed colored, too. It is not a red-leafed hosta all summer long but it is a red-leafed hosta in the spring until the really hot weather above 92 degrees hits.

The next year I had enough divisions to divide my red hosta and I sent it to the lab. That left me with two small pieces for me and one gone to be "sliced and diced." Our seedling was just really a green hosta, not variegated, so it should have been easy to multiply. The tissue culture process is a sterile procedure, fungi and bacteria are the enemies that rob our little explants of the sugar they need to grow and multiply. Usually, a hosta going into culture can be cleaned up externally and will prosper in culture but sometimes it might have bacteria that live inside it that seem to never be eliminated. Research now shows that these internal bacteria may actually be beneficials that help hostas prosper. Our red-leafed hosta has these bacteria and it was slow to get going, touch and go for a while. Nothing is easy.

Last year, the cultures really got going. We got ahead of the bacteria in the lab and our red-leafed hosta was multiplying well. We were able to root some out and last summer I potted up the first liners here at the nursery. Now it was time for a name.

I sometimes name my seedlings before they go to the lab but usually wait until they go through the whole tissue culture process and we have plants back at the nursery. Occasionally, I will think of the perfect name early on and it will stick, like 'Curly Fries.' Naming my red-leafed hosta was not that simple.

I like my hosta names to reflect two things. The name should match the plant, sort of help describe it. 'Orange Marmalade' PP#16,742 is orange, 'Curly Fries' is curly. The name should also have a positive appeal, at least for me, 'Orange Marmalade' PP#16,742 instead of 'Clockwork Orange.' People should like the name as it is commonly used. In this case nothing came quickly.

Now, I want to thank all my hosta friends that offered names for this plant. Many were very clever, very good, but I knew we would patent this hosta and it had to have a respectable big market name, nothing too cutesy. I finally decided to just tell it as it was. It is the first red-leafed hosta that blushes down the leaf from the tip toward the base. It is 'First Blush' PPAF. The name became "official" last summer when Mark Zilis showed a photo of it to the Perennial Plant Association Convention in Cincinnati.

To be honest, a short description of the bringing to market of a hosta, albeit our first red-leafed hosta, is not the stuff of legends. Legends have more intrigue that fighting bacteria in the tissue culture lab. Even the story of 'Ginsu Knife' is more



Hosta 'Curly Fries'

tenuous, as my only plant was almost lost to an accidental overdose of fertilizer. So painfully, I share this now with you.

I know there is evil in the world, but I try hard to avoid it, to banish it from my world. I like to see the best in everyone and probably am a little too trusting. I just cannot live any other way. When hosta folks come to visit my nursery, I really enjoy showing them not just the hostas they might like to take home with them but also the ones they cannot have, my seedlings. I love to see their reactions and really value everyone's opinion.

Like I said before, all my seedlings are crammed together in one hoop house. They have a little plastic label in each pot with a number and the cross but no real identifying name like many hybridizers have. I had the two pots of 'First Blush' PPAF a larger one and a smaller one, from when the plant was divided and sent to the lab. They were tucked in with others, not at all on display. I was really looking forward to later in the summer, for now they finally seemed big enough to bloom well and set seed.

As is my habit I would check on my seedlings most every day, talking back to the ones that spoke to me. One day in May, the little pot of 'First Blush' PPAF was gone! I could not believe it, it must be there somewhere, where did I put it? No, it was gone. We had had lots of people in the nursery, it could have been anyone. My first impulse was to hide the larger pot but then I felt like I might be over reacting. No, they had taken the one that they thought I would not miss; surely they would not come back in the middle of the night and take the other.

If you have ever had something valuable stolen, then you know how personally violated you feel. Plant people are known for their honesty, but I also know that some steal plants. But there is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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 'Envy'



Hosta 'Leapin' Lizard'



Hosta 'Imperial Palace'



Hosta 'Infatuation'



Hosta 'Hobby Time'



Hosta 'Brentwood Blues'



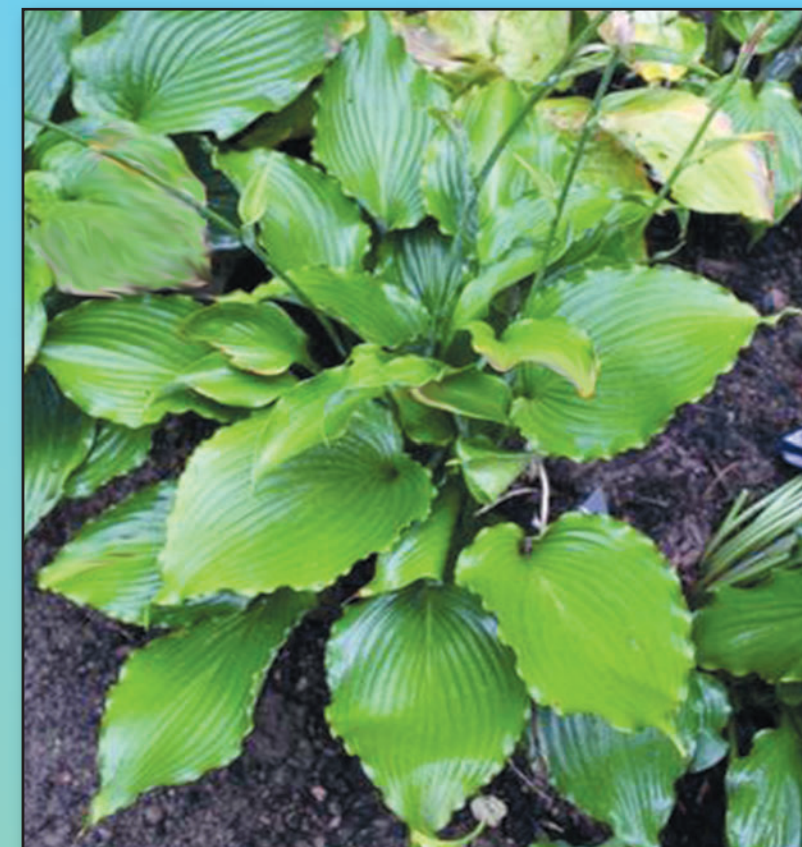
Hosta 'Lime Ripple'



Hosta 'Leather and Lace'



Hosta 'Icy Halo'



Hosta 'Petticoat Junction'



Hosta 'Hallelujah'

THE LOCAL GOSSIP 2015, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

more. Hostadom is populated with especially good, caring people and to find evil within its walls was very disturbing. It was something that I did not want to give into, that is until they came back two days later and stole the second larger pot of 'First Blush' PPAF. The padlocks went up on the doors to the seedling house within an hour.

Fortunately, the plant was still safely in a lab a thousand miles away but my hybridizing hopes were dashed. The plants would be replaced by thousands more, it was not the end of the world but the experience has taken a lot of the fun out of showing off my new babies to visitors. Hopefully I can rebuild my trust that is **what is** so shaken. Hostas are supposed to fun. This was no fun.

So there's my story, and I'm sticking to it. The successful launch of 'First Blush' PPAF and all the excitement it has created since mid-January has made it all worthwhile. There is a happy ending to the story after all or is this just the beginning? Time will tell.

Best of luck to all of you seed growers who have purchased 'First Blush' PPAF. I can't wait for you to show me baby photos of its children and grandchildren.

The day the hostas died

Officially it was September 10, 2014, but I got the call on Tuesday. It is one of those events that you will always remember where you were when you heard the news, like 9/11 or the Kennedy assassination. I was in the post office parking lot just pulling out when my cell phone rang. Yes, that is my emergency cellphone that no one but family has the number to. It was Mark Zilis and he was closing down Q & Z Nursery immediately. No chance to talk him out of it.

As the shockwaves rolled over Hostadom, I felt strangely calm. Maybe it was because I had just spent the last ten months restructuring my business to overcome the loss of Shady Oaks Nursery as a major supplier of my contract hostas. Things were already changing but now much more quickly than I had hoped. But nobody died and I had not lost one of my best friends in the world, everything was the same, just different.

As all this started to sink in, as is my nature, I started to wax philosophical. What did the loss of Shady Oaks and now Q & Z really mean, not just for me and Green Hill Farm, but for all of Hostadom? To look into the future, I began to examine the past. How did this all happen? Is this only a lesson in business and economics? How do I make sure it doesn't happen again? Are we all running out of options?

I guess it all starts with supply and demand and then quickly moves to pricing structure. I do believe that in the past ten years too many hostas, especially mediocre ones, have been named and introduced. Collectors cannot keep up. The same thing happened with stamp collecting, too many new stamps. It is not the stamps, or hostas, themselves that are the problem so much but you have to find a place to store them. Stamp albums and supplies end up costing more than the stamps themselves and start to get as expensive as prime garden real estate. Too many hostas per year were introduced; there should be fewer, but better hostas in the future. Quality matters. Great new hostas will always have a place in Hostadom, and they will bring a higher price.

What really closed the doors of both Shady Oaks and Q & Z was that more money was going out than coming in. "You can only lose money for so long." Extremely low hosta liner prices, while good for consumers and in theory all of Hostadom, did not match up with the costs of doing business, especially labor costs. Good employees are expensive and well worth the expense but the revenue must be there, too. Hosta liners priced at \$1.00 - \$2.00 were just not profitable. Sometimes the more you sell, the more money you lose. So prices will have to rise, but new retail hostas should still be available for \$12.00 - \$25.00 and now wholesaler and retailer alike will be more profitable.

Did I say, the quality of the hostas introduced needs to be improved, a lot? Very few new hostas make it into the top 25 of the AHS Popularity Poll. Marketing is part of the problem, that will need to improve also, but we need new "must have" hostas that no one in Hostadom can resist. 'Curly Fries' is that type of plant. I believe 'Ambrosia' PPAF and our new red-leafed hosta, 'First Blush' PPAF, are, too. Not all new hostas can be "homeruns" but they can be interesting. It is also time to stop introducing every tetraploid sport we find coming out of tissue culture, especially the really weird looking ones that make poor garden plants. I am also a little bored with slow growing, wide-margined forms of every hosta under the shade tree. Usually, they are not improvements on the original.

So, for all this to work in the future, we will have to control our impulse to introduce every hosta that falls in our lap, we will have to find the best hostas and market them well, and yes, these hostas will have to cost a little more.

There is also a "Back to the Future" aspect to all this however. With the doors of the labs of Shady Oaks and Q & Z now closed, the two largest producers of contract hosta liners in the US are now gone. I should know, together they produced 95% of the hostas I bought every year. There is a silver lining to all this, something very good for all of Hostadom. Small hosta growers, hybridizers and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

SPRING 2015

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' PPAF 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' PPAF 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. **\$75.00 Limited**

♥ **'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. **\$40**

'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. **\$25**

'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. **\$40**

'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**

♥ **'Hobby Time'** (Solberg 2015) - (F2 seedling of ['Hercules' X 'Kinkaku' F2 seedling]) - Large, (22" X 40") My goal was to produce a large yellow hosta that stays yellow and grows. 'Hobby Time' is just that. The result of four crosses within the *H. montana* family, from 'Kinkaku' to 'Hercules,' its large leaves and prominent veins make a dramatic statement all summer long. **\$40**

'Icy Halo' (C. Tomashek 2014) - (Sport of 'Parhelion') - Huge, (32" X 72") Nancy loves 'Sum and Substance' sports. She loves their round leaves and their huge size. This new sport of 'Parhelion' has rich green leaves and a pure white margin. Save a large space for this dramatic hosta that is the pride and joy of Cindy Tomashek in Minnesota. **\$45**

♥ **'Infatuation'** (Solberg 2014) - (49 Best X 'Red October') - Small, (10" X 20" or larger) This very special hosta resembles a bird in flight. It is a very waxy

blue *H. kikutii* in form with rich cranberry colored petioles. The leaf margins gently undulate, effortlessly gliding on a warm summer breeze. It blooms in August with purple flowers on arching scapes. This seedling of mine is a great mix of the species *H. longipes*, *H. kikutii*, and *H. pycnophylla*. It demands attention and deserves a special spot in the garden or a ceramic container. Beautiful purple scapes produce seed pods easily. Great for hybridizing. It is love at first sight. **\$30**

'Leather and Lace' (D. Dean 2013) - (('Liberty Bell' X 'Urajiro Hachijo') X 'Ebony Spires') X 'Astral 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. **\$35**

'Light Ray' (G. Ray 2015) - Large, (20" X 38" or larger) A seedling from plantsman Graham Ray of Greensboro, NC, this upright hosta has large leaves with a wide, wonderful white border. Imagine it as a little like 'Victory' but a size or so smaller. Striking in a container in a special spot in the garden. **\$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. **\$25**

'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. **\$25**

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

Medium to Large Hostas:

'Bailey's Cream' (D. & M. Beilstein 2009) - ('Sea Prize' X 'Blue Angel') - Medium, (20" X 36") I like different hostas, especially different colors on new leaf shapes. This hosta has both, from its clean pure white margins and Irish green centers to its not quite round, shiny leaves. It looks a little "unhosta," maybe more tropical, and I like that. Nice lavender flowers in mid-summer. **\$20**

'Blueberry Waffles' (Sandy Brown 2008) - ('Spilt Milk' X 'Abiqua Drinking Gourd') - Very Large, (30" X 68") This is the one you have all been waiting for!!! Maybe it is the huge almost perfectly round leaves, or their deep blue color, the color of blueberries, with all the perfect puckering, or maybe just the impressive mound of foliage that makes it the perfect specimen, (probably all three), but this is a spectacular hosta that you can't get out of your mind. It flowers with its *H. sieboldiana* kin in June. It's destined to be one of the hottest hostas of the year. **\$25**

'Bridal Falls' PPAF (J. van den Top, Walters Gardens)

- (Sport of 'Niagara Falls') - Large, (24" X 40") This tall beautifully arching hosta is the white-margined sport of the classic 'Niagara Falls.' It has the ruffled picrust edge of its parent and grows quickly into a magnificent clump. The flower scapes appear first as rising stars with whitish bracts before revealing their lavender flowers in June. This one is destined for greatness. **\$25**

'Brutus' (D. & M. Beilstein 2007) - ('Sea Drift' X *H. venusta*) - Very Large, (36" X 65") 'Brutus' is a huge-leafed, dark green monster that is a little unruly. At maturity, every leaf has an intricate pattern of ridges and valleys that draw closer inspection. It is topped by pretty purple flowers in early summer on tall scapes. It makes an impressive specimen if raised above ground level. 'Brutus' is a beast! **\$25**

♥ **'Cherry Flip'** (Solberg, M. Zilis) - (Seeding 48/49 X 'One Man's Treasure') - Medium, (16" X 30") This upright hosta from our purple petiole hybridizing program has nicely rippled green leaves. The petioles are maroon on both sides on this seedling. Very fertile purple flowers appear late in summer and may extend into fall. Perfect in a pot. **\$20**

'Cup of Grace' (D. & M. Beilstein 2009) - ('Halcyon' X 'Breeder's Choice' op. seedling) - Medium, (21" X 36") What do hosta folks want in a "dream hosta"? Frequently, they want it to be very dark green with white flowers. Add a very upright habit and highly cupped leaves and you have 'Cup of Grace.' This hosta is very well proportioned and exhibits classic grace. It is striking as the focal point of a mixed container. **\$20**

'Dream Boat' (D. & M. Beilstein 2009) - (*H. nigrescens* op) - Medium to Large, (22" X 40") From the first time I saw it, the unusual cupping and color of this hosta, made it a favorite of mine. It's truly unique foot-long artichoke colored, upright leaves are boat-shaped, a small flotilla sailing in the wind. It flowers in July and August, is fertile and would make a great breeding plant. It is worth a look for sure. **\$20**

'Fall Dazzler' (Japan, M. Zilis 2009) - (*H. longipes* 'Urajiro Iwa' X unknown) - Small, (8" X 17") This bright white-margined hosta from Japan makes a small dense mound that is a real showoff in the fall when it comes into full bloom. Perfect by a walk or in a bed of small hostas. **\$15**

NEW '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 or "Two for \$30"**

♥ **'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 or "Two for \$20"**

♥ **'Frozen Margarita'** (Solberg 2003) - ('Fried Ba-

Our New Hostas for 2015

'First Blush' PPAF

'Ambrosia' PPAF

'Envy'

'Evening Blush'

'Frosted Mini Hearts'

'Hallelujah'

'Hobby Time'

'Icy Halo'

'Imperial Palace'

'Infatuation'

'Itty Bitty'

'Leather and Lace'

'Light Ray'

'Petticoat Junction'

'Rough Knight'

'Winter Frost'

nanas' sport) - Large, (22" X 42") This hosta has very shiny, plantain-yellow leaves with a clean, variable white margin. It is a rapid grower that appreciates morning sun in the garden. Its light lavender flowers are very fragrant flowers in August. Cool and refreshing, served only without salt. **\$15**

♥ **'Grape Fizz'** (Solberg 2011) - ('Rhapsody in Blue' X *H. plantaginea*) - Large, (16" X 36") Here is a hosta with heavily substanced 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. **\$15**

♥ **'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**

♥ **'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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

THE LOCAL GOSSIP 2015, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

even home gardeners can now have a patch of hostas lined out in the garden or nursery that they can propagate by division, yes, with a knife. They can be dug and sold to visitors or easily shipped through the mail or UPS and FedEx. Computers have made do-it-yourself shipping much easier, although I still like to go to the UPS Store and let them do all the work. They work for free for me and that saves me an employee.

A small ad in *The Hosta Journal*, maybe a table in vending at a regional event, or something as simple as an email list of friends and potential customers is all the advertising you need. Have an open house once a year and invite your corner of Hostadom. It is fun and can be profitable. I expect these new small hosta nurseries will sell their introductions at high, very high prices; these are exclusive hostas after all. They will also have a few of the very best new hostas but will prove to be very selective in what they buy from wholesalers. It will be fun to see an increase in unique hosta nurseries and their unique hostas.

So as you see, for me these are exciting times. (I do tend to be an optimist.) Let's just call this a market correction and move on from here.

In the past few months since that fateful September day, I have been asked many times,

"Where will we get new hostas from now?" It is true that new hostas still drive the market in many ways. Every retailer needs new hostas to sell every year for those loyal customers who are always looking for that special hosta that they have never seen before. Some need just a few but large specialty hosta nurseries may need as many as 50 or more new plants each year to fill their catalogues.

So where will they come from? Green Hill Farm has always been a source of great new hostas. To help fill the vacuum we will now try to offer a much larger number of new hostas as well as some popular recent introductions. With our new partnership with A to Z Perennials, the new lab venture of Mark Zilis and his son Andy, we will be able to offer a wide range of hosta liners to the wholesale trade. Others will probably increase their number of introductions also to help fill the demand.

At this time we will still offer our own hosta hybrids and those of other hybridizers as retail plants the first year of their introduction and then as wholesale bare root plants and liners later. I am not sure which end of the business will tug the hardest but in the next three years all this should sort itself out. Like I said, the future seems bright.

Some things are going to change; some will pretty much stay the same. In the end, new hostas will become more precious and again we will all

remember that hostas, unlike many other perennials, are a high value plant. Reasonable pricing will lead to profits for all and the party can continue. I for one want it never to stop and with your support we can continue to enjoy our hostas and hosta friends. Hostas are supposed to be fun, fun for all of us. Like the song goes, "It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine!"

'Ambrosia' PPAF in Garden Gate Magazine

Several gardening magazines have new plant feature articles after the first of the year. They promote new plants for the gardening public, plants that wholesalers hope 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 2015. A few years ago, 'Curly Fries' was featured by Khelm's Song Sparrow Farm and Nursery and we all now know the success that little hosta has enjoyed. This year it was our turn to promote our new hosta, 'Ambrosia' PPAF.

To quote the article: "Most people grow hostas for their foliage, and 'Ambrosia' PPAF won't disappoint you there. The lemon-yellow center is edged with blue – sure to add a bright spot in the

shade. Besides the pretty leaves, there are big 3-inch tubular fragrant lavender flowers nodding on scapes, or stems that grow 36 to 38 inches tall. You and the neighborhood hummingbirds will love them.

For the most colorful foliage, give 'Ambrosia' PPAF morning sun or strong dappled light throughout the day. Plants will look their best with well-drained soil and regular moisture."

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.

"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.

Marketing is something that hosta growers do not do very well. As more and more nurseries rely on Google to have their customers find them, they tend to market themselves and not so much their hostas. In the Internet world this certainly makes sense, but it creates little excitement for individual plants. We really need both, hosta folks and hostas themselves that are stars. 'Curly Fries' shows it can be done. Remember, in the end it really is about the plants.

SPRING 2015 COMPLETE RETAIL HOSTA LISTINGS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

parents. Give this one a little extra sun also. **\$20**
NEW '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 or "Two for \$30"

'Jetstream' (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - (Seedling of *H. yingeri* OP seedling) - Medium to Large, (26" X 40") I am a sucker for a waxy blue hosta. I also like hostas that make perfect clumps, with all their leaves neatly arranged in just the right place. This medium-sized hosta, with the help of a little morning sun, is the perfect combination of both. A seedling of Doug Beilstein, plant this one next to 'June.' **\$20**

'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. **\$25**

'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. **\$25**

'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 waxy yellow leaves and red on both sides of the petiole into the leaf and red scapes. It has lavender flowers, maybe with a little red, and is a great breeding plant, fertile both ways. Light years away from its sibling 'Smiley Face,' an equally stellar hosta. **\$20 or "Two for \$30"**

'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**

'Millennium' (Wilkins 1995) - ('Herb Benedict' X 'Sagae') - Huge (36" X 80") One of the best extremely large blue hostas because of its huge heavily substanced, rounded, dark blue leaves, good growth rate and heat tolerance. Near white flowers open on tall scapes in late June. It is impressive in the garden or a large container. **\$20**

'Nate the Great' (Solberg 2003) - (*H. nigrescens* X 'Tokudama Aureonebulosa') - Large, (22" X 40") Tall and proud with large round blue-green leaves that are deeply cupped and puckered, this large upright hosta is worthy of the front of the bed. Lavender flowers on tall straight scapes top this one off in July. It is named for my son Nathan. **\$20**

'Night Shift' (D. Savory 1991) - (Sport of *H. 'Daybreak'*) - Large, (22" X 50" or more) This large-leafed sport of 'Daybreak' has a dark green margin and great yellow color in the leaf center that lasts well throughout the summer. It makes a spectacular specimen clump as it spreads to fill a wide space in the garden. It blooms in July and August with nice lavender flowers. Great when placed near a walk. **\$20**

'Orange Marmalade' PPAF^{16,742} (Solberg 2002) - (Sport of 'Paul's Glory') - Large, (18" X 42") Breath-taking mound of heart-shaped blue leaves with a center that emerges bright yellow, then turns an orangish gold before becoming pale yellow or white depending on the amount of sun. Lavender flowers in July. Beautifully variegated all summer! Yes, it really looks orange-yellow or yellow-orange, like the Crayola crayons. **\$20**

'Pacific Sunset' (R. Goodwin 2003) - (Sport of seedling) - Small-medium, (10" X 30") White-margined hostas are common but blue hostas with creamy white edges are much rarer. This medium-sized seedling of Randy Goodwin has a coolness to its appearance, a slight waviness and nice flowers in summer. It is a front of the bed hosta that should be admired at close range. **\$15**

'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 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**

'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 Zonn-eveld, 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**
'H. plantaginea 'Poseidon' (M. Zilis 2010) - (Sport of *H. plantaginea* 'Athena') - Large, (20" X 45") This hosta is the best variegated sport of *H. plantaginea* in the trade today. It has wide, bright white leaf margins, even white edges on the flower bracts as well as the 30+ petaled flowers of 'Venus.' It is much more vigorous for me than other variegated forms and likes several hours of bright light and lots of water. I think this is a great hosta. **\$35**

'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 or "Two for \$20"**

'Prairie Sunset' (M. Zilis 2009) - (Sport of 'Prairie Fire') - Medium, (19" X 48") This is a hosta that I have wanted to have for over ten years since I first saw it at Q & Z Nursery. The yellow color is warm and glowing and the contrast of the bright green margin defines the undulating leaf perfectly. The prominent veins give it strength and structure. It is a large, medium hosta. **\$20**

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. **\$20**
'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. **\$25**

'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. **\$50**

'Spinach Soufflé' (Solberg 2006) - (Sport of 'Garden Treasure,' tetraploid?) - Medium, (14" X 30") Color is why we collect hostas and this one is all about great, bright color. Almost round, rich green leaves with a very bright 2" gold margin grace this heavily substanced hosta. Slow growth rate to a mature clump but looks great in a pot as a young plant. Near white flowers in June. **\$20**

'Spring Shower' (Solberg 2007) - (*H. sieboldiana* X 'One Man's Treasure' F2 seedling) - Medium, (14" X 30" or larger) A welcoming sight in a special place in the garden, this light blue "Longiana" has classic heart-shaped leaves with strong venation and most resembles a "Tardiana." It has light lavender flowers in July. Try it next to 'Camelot.' **\$15 or "Two for \$20"**

'Sugar Plum' (Solberg 2011) - (Seedling X 'One Man's Treasure') - Medium, (20" X 28") This is the one!!! The ultimate goal of breeding purple-petioled

hostas is to produce an upright plant with rich regal purple color that runs up into the veins at the base of the leaf. Add a bright white back to the leaf and you have the perfection of the purple running all the way into the white. This is that dream plant. It has purple scapes as well and blooms in late August and September. It is a prolific seed producer. **\$30**

'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**

'Sun Shower' (Solberg 2007) - (*H. sieboldiana* X 'One Man's Treasure' F2 seedling) - Medium, (14" X 30" or larger) 'Sun Shower' was a surprise. A "Longiana" in every way, it is a rich yellow in spring that catches every eye. It will fade a little toward chertreuse in mid-summer but remains a very attractive hosta. It is a one of a kind and the centerpiece of my "Longiana" hybridizing program. Light lavender flowers appear on yellow scapes in July. **\$20**

'Sweet Sunshine' (Solberg 1997) - ('Sweet Susan' X 'Tokudama Aureonebulosa') - Medium to large, (16" X 36") Still a hybridizing breakthrough, this yellow-gold hosta has round leaves that are cupped and puckered like a 'Tokudama' but also has near white fragrant flowers in June and July. The best thing of all, however, is that it grows very well. I saw several nice clumps of it in New England. Now available again. **\$15**

'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**

'Thunder Boomer' (Solberg 2007) - (*H. sieboldiana* X 'One Man's Treasure' F2 seedling) - Large, (18" X 38" or larger) This is the largest of my "Longianas" to date. Its stately, pointed, medium blue-green leaves are gently rippled, arching along the midrib, providing a calm elegance. It has good substance, sturdy scapes with a nice floral display in mid-summer and like all the other "Longianas" it is a great "long season" hosta, holding up well into the fall. **\$20**
'Titanic' PPAF^{12,402} (H. Hansen, Shady Oaks Nursery 1999) - (Sport of 'Sum and Substance') - Huge, (30" X 68") Nancy loves the wide chertreuse margin and dark green leaf center of this 'Sum and Substance' sport but color is only the beginning of its attraction. The leaves are sometimes cupped and then sometimes domed and then again half yellow and half green. We are happy to offer it again. **\$20**

'Tropical Dancer' PPAF^{21,209} (J. van den Top, D. Eecheute 2008) - (Sport of 'Spring Fling') - Medium, (14" X 26") This tetraploid sport of 'Spring Fling' has the same wonderful ruffling as its parent but has a much wider white margin so it stands out in the nursery or garden. It is sure to brighten up any dark corner of the garden. **\$20 or "Two for \$30"**

'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

SPRING 2015 COMPLETE RETAIL HOSTA LISTINGS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9



Hosta 'Rough Knight'

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 'Elator') - Huge, (36" X 84") This is an awesome hosta, one of the best ever. Yes, this wide white-margined sport of 'Elator' requires a substantial piece of garden real estate but its stately upright habit deserves a prominent spot. Don't have room? It makes a great pot plant also. Hosta of the Year for 2015. \$20 or **'Two for \$30'**

'Winter Snow' (Winterberry Farms & J. Anderson 2003) - (Sport of 'Sum and Substance') - Huge, (35" X 70") This wonderful sport of 'Sum and Substance' makes a huge spreading mound of round 20" chartruse leaves that have exquisite wavy white margins that are consistently evenly wide. It has the typical tall scapes and lavender flowers in July that generally need early pruning. It is more impressive than its parent to me. \$20

Miniature and Small Hostas:

'Appletini' (M. Zilis, M. Vanous 2009) - (Yellow sport of 'Blue Dimples' X 'Shining Tot') - Mini to Small, (6" X 14") A great new mini, maybe the best of the "tini" series from Mark Zilis, it has the bright yellow color, the shine, good substance, and cute leaf shape to make this fast growing hosta a star in the garden or in a container. It also has nice lavender flowers in July. \$15

♥ **'Baby Blue Eyes'** (Solberg 2006) - ('Cody' X 'Dorset Blue') - Mini-Small, (6" X 16") This little hosta is a darling. It is a very cute tight, flat mound of heart-shaped pretty blue leaves that grows fast. Not too big for a large trough, it is also tough enough to show off in the garden. Light lavender flowers on short scapes in July. \$15 or **'Two for \$20'**

'Blue Lollipop' (H. & D. Benedict, R. Kuenster) - Small, (4" X 14") This little hosta is very blue in color and very slow to grow, so it makes a great little mini. At maturity the leaves are folded and a little puckered. Probably from Herb Benedict's "Tardiana" in breeding, it makes a very nice dense clump. \$20

'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, where 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

♥ **'Cookie Crumbs'** (Solberg, Zilis 2002) - (Sport of 'Tiny Tears') - Mini, (5" X 10") Finally a clean white-margined mini reminiscent of *H. venusta*. This very flat mound of green heart-shaped leaves has a surprisingly wide white margin. It has purple flowers in June. \$25

♥ **'Corkscrew'** (Solberg 2003) - ('Tortifrons' X 'One Man's Treasure') - Small, (9" X 22") Like its parent, 'Tortifrons,' the leaves are dark green and contorted but unlike its parent, it grows very well making a full clump quickly. The small clump of upright and arching twisted, shiny dark green leaves produces lavender flowers in September and October, frequently on forked scapes. Winner of 2002 Best Seedling Award at First Look. One of a kind! \$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

'Firefly' (D. & J. Ward 1996) - ('Pin Stripe' seedling) - Small, (7" X 16") This very bright narrow-leaved creamy white-margined little hosta has lots of personality. It is small enough for a container but also large enough for the garden. It blooms in July. Its shiny leaves flash in the evening. \$20

NEW 'Frosted Mini Hearts' (M. Zilis 2010) - ('Korean Snow' X 'Faithful Heart') - Mini, (4" X 11") This little hosta has thick, shiny green leaves that have flurries of white variegation throughout, like its parent 'Korean Snow.' It makes a flat little mound that catches light and reflects it. Interesting. \$20

'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 or **'Two for \$20'**

'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 a 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

'Imp' (H. Hansen 2006) - (['Yellow Splash' X *H. tibae*] X *H. venusta* X [*H. venusta* X 'Shining Tot']) - Mini, (3" X 7") This is a really small mini with ruffled dark green leaves have a clean white margin. It grows much better in a container and might get lost in the garden. \$20

'Itsy Bitsy Spider' (G. Johnson) - ('Hadspen Heron' seedling) - Mini, (2.5" X 6") This hosta has a flat spider-like habit, short, narrow leaves with surprising substance. It is perfect for the trough or fairy garden. Light lavender flowers in July. \$20

NEW 'Itty Bitty' (M. Zilis, 2010) - (Sport of 'Green Mouse Ears') - Mini, (5" X 13") This little guy is a little unstable. It usually has a pure white leaf center and a dark green margin but sometimes it gets a little crazy and the leaves become streaked, which is not a bad thing. It is a little slow to grow but is a true mini. I like it. \$25

'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

'Lemon Zest' (M. Zilis 2009) - ('Shining Tot' X 'Gold Regal') - Mini, (5" X 12") This nice little, somewhat upright yellow-gold hosta has lance-shaped leaves with pretty good substance, and is a little different from most minis. It flowers late, in August and will nicely fill the front corner of your next trough. \$15

'Light Everlasting' (PSI-Shady Oaks Nursery) - (Sport of 'Eternal Flame') - Small, (8" X 16") maybe larger) This white-margined sport of 'Eternal Flame' has proven to be a very sturdy little plant. Its leaves have excellent substance and very wide margins, even on small plants. It is not a fast grower and will probably enjoy the extra loving care of a container at least for a year or so. I think it is a winter. \$15

'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. \$30

'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

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

'Pixie Vamp' (D. & J. Ward 1996) - ('Pinstripe' seedling) - Mini, (6" X 12") This showy little hosta makes a perfect mound of bright green heart-shaped leaves bordered in snowy white. It has lavender flowers on purple scapes in June and July. Very vigorous in the garden or in a container. A favorite of Nancy's. \$15

♥ **'Smiley Face'** (Solberg 2011) - (*H. clausa normalis* F2 seedling X 'Strawberry Banana Smoothie') - Small, (7" X 16") This hosta just makes me smile. It has the cutest round leaves that are full of personality and a unique rich yellow color. It has pink petioles and surprisingly heavy substance. It makes a small tight mound perfect in a pot or a special place in the garden. Pink scapes and rich purple flowers with reddish tubes appear in July. It is fertile both ways. \$20

♥ **'Sugar Babe'** (Solberg 1977) - ('Iron Gate Supreme' X 'Saishu Jima') - Small, (10" X 16") This is the smallest fragrant-flowered hosta that I know. Its narrow leaves have decent substance and a very attractive cream margin and often some streaking. It is stoloniferous and rapidly makes a spreading mound. Its unique rich purple flowers have a very strong sugary fragrance that you can smell from the garden path. Limited, never tissue cultured. \$35

'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 or **'Two for \$20'**

'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 \$20':

♥ **'Baby Blue Eyes'** (Solberg 2006) - ('Cody' X 'Dorset Blue') - Mini-Small, (6" X 16") This little hosta is a darling. It is a very cute tight, flat mound of heart-shaped pretty blue leaves that grows fast. Not too big for a large trough, it is also tough enough to show off in the garden. Light lavender flowers on short scapes in July. \$15 or **'Two for \$20'**

♥ **'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! \$15 or **'Two for \$20'**

'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 or **'Two for \$20'**

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'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'**

♥ **'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 or **'Two for \$30'**

NEW '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 or **'Two for \$30'**

♥ **'Mango Salsa'** (Solberg 2011) - (*H. clausa normalis* F2 seedling X 'Strawberry Banana Smoothie') - Medium, (12" X 20") Maybe the best of this red seedling cross, this hosta is sun tolerant, has unusual wavy yellow leaves and red on both sides of the petiole into the leaf and red scapes. It has lavender flowers, maybe with a little red, and is a great breeding plant, fertile both ways. Light years away from its sibling 'Smiley Face,' an equally stellar hosta. \$20 or **'Two for \$30'**

♥ **NEW '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 or **'Two for \$30'**

'Tropical Dancer' ^{PP#21209} (J. van den Top, D. Eechaute 2008) - (Sport of 'Spring Fling') - Medium, (14" X 26") This tetraploid sport of 'Spring Fling' has the same wonderful ruffling as its parent but has a much wider white margin so it stands out in the nursery or garden. It is sure to brighten up any dark corner of the garden. \$20 or **'Two for \$30'**

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Ordering Instructions

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

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

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

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 | |
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| REGULAR UPS SHIPPING or | | 15.00 | |
| USPS PRIORITY MAIL (west of Rockies) | | 25.00 | |
| TOTAL | | | |

Come see us at

**The 2015 American Hosta Society Convention
 June 18-20**

in Raleigh, NC
 Hosted by Nancy and Bob Solberg
 Yes, we will have bus tours to
 Plants Delights and
 Green Hill Farm
 as well as
 five other fine residential gardens.
 Full Registration is \$230
 including bus tours and several meals.
 Hosta Show, Auction and Vending
 is open to the general public!

For more information email:
 HostaBob@gmail.com

**Midwest Regional
 July 9-11**

in Dubuque, IA
 For more information contact:
 Cheryl Hird at 563-557-1535

**Fall Hosta Forum
 September 18-19**

in Edinboro, PA
 For more information visit:
 www.wnyhosta.com

**UPS Shipping
 is \$15.00 & \$25.00 Rocky Mountains and
 West Coast via USPS Priority Mail**

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 from late April through Memorial Day from 9:00 to 5:00. Please check our website for sale dates and directions to the new nursery in Franklinton. We will have a wide selection of our hostas available at very reasonable prices, as well as ferns, conifers and maybe a few other surprises. Hope to see you soon.

Subscribe to the "Gossip Jr."

Our eight page newsletter printed twice a year
 One year \$8.00 | Three years \$20.00

'Blue Perfection' is the exclusive club plant! 2015

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.

Our exclusive club hosta this year is 'Blue Perfection', a sport of our great new hosta 'Ambrosia' PPAF. It is the large, fast growing, waxy blue hosta that has been the dream of many of us. As an added bonus, it has very fragrant flowers, too. It is very sun tolerant and actually is bluer in half a day of cool sun. Yes, it breaks all the stereotypes about blue hostas and is an exciting addition to any hosta garden. 'Blue Perfection' is \$35 per plant with a minimum order of 10 plants. Supply is limited so order early.

Other new hostas include 'Leather and Lace' from Don Dean, a very unusual creamy white-margined blue hosta with very ruffled leaves and good substance as the name would imply and 'Rough Knight', a rich green cupped cutie from Doug Beilstein. 'Light Ray' is also a new showy, variegated introduction this year from Graham Ray in North Carolina. 'Blueberry Waffles' and 'Hallelujah' are recent blues, that have finally made it to the club list. Yes, there are a few minis, too. 'Baby Blue Eyes' is back, along with 'Brentwood Blues', 'Mouse Trap' and 'Wonderful'. If you would like more information about our 2015 club offerings, you can call Bob or Nancy at the nursery, 919-309-0649 or e-mail us at HostaBob@gmail.com. Remember, all these hostas are pictured in the "Hosta Clubs 2015" section of our website, www.HostaHosta.com with our complete Club List.

Each year Green Hill Farm offers a special new hosta introduction exclusively to hosta clubs for their members. This year 'Blue Perfection' is the 2015 exclusive club plant! This usually gets us in a little trouble with some of our other customers, but we will not offer this hosta on any of our wholesale or retail lists. The only way that you can get 'Blue Perfection' 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.

Hosta Patents: A Good Idea?

from the August 2014 "Gossip Jr."

I am sure some of you are wondering what all this fuss is now about patenting plants. Everywhere we go it seems the letters PPAF follow the cultivar names of everything from prairie grasses, to perennials, to trees, and yes hostas, too. You are probably also wondering if this is a good thing.

Well, if you hold the patent it should be a good thing. Plant patents and patents in general, allow the holder of the patent to control the marketing of their invention. New plants are considered inventions and if they are deemed distinct then can be awarded a US Patent for 20 years. This protects the hybridizer's intellectual property.

Plant patents insure exclusivity. No one can asexually propagate, in the case of hostas by division or tissue culture, a patented plant without permission and that permission usually comes in the form of a licensing agreement and royalties paid. Royalties for hostas are in the 10-50 cent range usually.

This exclusivity allows control of marketing. The patent holder or the license holders then can determine how and to whom the hosta is sold. It allows it to be put in a marketing program like Proven Winners® without fear of it being sold by a competing program. Patents offer control and compensation.

I currently hold one hosta patent on 'Orange Marmalade' PPAF and soon hope to have one on our new introduction 'Ambrosia' PPAF. Some patent holders relinquish all the marketing control of their plants to the large nurseries to which they have licensed and wait for the checks to roll in. I am a very "hands on" patent holder.

Since I own my own nursery I have the ability to introduce my own hostas, many hosta hybridizers cannot. Yes, I can sell them and make all the profit initially, but I have a small nursery and do not wish to market tens of thousands of my new hosta 'Ambrosia' PPAF through Green Hill Farm. So I will license others to do that for me when I think the time is right.

So why not patent all my hostas? Well, first it is not free. The fees alone can be almost \$2000. That's 20,000 plants that need to be sold at a 10 cent royalty just to break even. Not all hostas are "big market" plants and to be honest, it is not that easy to sell 2000 of any one hosta much less 20,000.

The value of exclusivity, marketing control, and royalties

must be weighed against each other. I can have exclusive control of one of my introductions for 2-3 years without a patent. I can also control who gets the plants and create separate markets for my customers. For most of my hostas, I am on to the next "bigger and better" one in that time period, so there is no need to patent everything.

So the real question is, "Is the increased use of plant patents on hostas a good thing for Hostadom?" I think we have pretty well covered the advantages of patenting hostas and that the beneficiaries are the patent holder and the licensed distributors. What is the downside?

Patented hostas require large numbers in inventory and thus limit the diversity of hostas that any nursery can offer. If your total hosta inventory is say 50,000 plants and all are patented hostas, big market plants, and you need to have at least 1000 of each in inventory, then at most you can only offer 50 different hostas. Patents limit the number of different hostas in the trade.

Carrying large numbers of a limited number of hostas also makes it harder to add new hostas to the line without dropping something else. Patented hostas tend to stay in the marketplace longer because of the large initial investment made in them. Patented hostas thus limit a nursery's flexibility in adjusting its inventory.

If your nursery is not introducing new hostas but buying them to resale, then these inventory problems are not very important. You carry the largest numbers of individual hostas that sell the best for you. Patented hostas usually come with a higher price however, because of the royalty paid and any marketing program charges for pots, labeling, tags, etc. They will have to be sold for a higher price also.

Not all hostas that have been patented are great hostas. Some are beautiful or very unique but are very difficult to grow in the nursery and in the garden. Some are not stable and true plants are produced in tissue culture in very small percentages. Then they often sport again in the garden. And yet they remain in the market mainly because of the patent attached to them and the invested money and marketing.

So the perfect patented hosta is one that sells well in all markets, is easy to propagate, and easy to grow in the nursery. It is irresistible to the wholesale and retail customer. It is flashy, huge, or extremely unique.



Hosta 'Ambrosia' PPAF

'Ambrosia' PPAF is this type of hosta. It is very, very waxy with blue margins and a light yellow leaf center. It rapidly fills a container in the nursery and grows fast in the garden. It tolerates, even needs, some bright light to be at its best and has fragrant flowers as an added bonus. It has a future in all markets, even the home improvement centers. That is why I am going to patent it.

So yes, for some hostas, I believe "big market" hostas, patents are a good idea. They should be Top 25 plants also; they should be great hostas. I also believe that very few hostas are worthy.

Patents are good for hybridizers, too. Especially since more and more of these are individuals without the means to introduce their own plants. These "amateurs," (really they are the pros!) are the R & D for many large nurseries now in all plant groups. The royalties compensate them for all the hours creating the hostas of their dreams at which we all marvel.

But if exclusivity is more important to your business model than the quality of the hostas you introduce then patents may not be good for the rest of us. Colorful patented hostas, marketed with color photos that do not grow well do not help keep gardeners coming back again and again for more hostas.

Patents may not be a bad thing in and of themselves but if they are used just to create exclusivity then they may not be so good for Hostadom. I was taught in Ecology class years ago that diversity is always good. I guess I am still a believer.