

The Green Hill Gossip

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\$5.00 | 919-309-0649
email: HostaBob@gmail.com

My love affair with gold hostas

I love gold hostas. I love the ones that are screaming yellow as they emerge in the spring and those that glow golden in the fall. I love seeing them as glittering nuggets of new life in the seedling tray, there in a sea of green. I love the really big ones, but not so much 'Sum and Substance', I guess I have overdosed on that one, but 'Key West', 'Sun Power' and my old favorite, 'Piedmont Gold'. This week, I think I love the minis the most of all, especially my new little magical 'Fairy Dust'. I just love gold hostas, I think I really do.

I love gold hostas but I do not love all gold hostas, or maybe some do not love me. I love to visit gardens in the North and see large clumps of gold *H. sieboldiana* and *H. montana* hybrids grown in bright sun with little or no burn of any kind on their heavily veined leaves. In my shady garden they either languish in the shade or fry in a couple of hours of midday sun. It makes me so jealous but I guess that's part of how I know I love gold hostas.

Some people, even hosta nursery owners, see gold hostas as sick hostas. They think that a good dose of nitrogen will turn them into healthy green hostas that are much more pleasing to their eyes. But I know chlorosis when I see it and gold hostas do not look sickly to me, in fact they are livelier to my eye than green hostas, blue hostas or even variegated hostas. They are excitable and demand attention.

Some people see gold hostas as sick hostas and they are right. There is a single dominant lethal mutation that is genetically inherited in gold hostas that makes them yellow and not green. (Wow that was a mouthful!) Said in a simpler way, they have one gene that is broken, it doesn't do its job and as a result the chloroplasts in the leaf cell do not develop properly. A hosta has two of these genes, one on each of its paired chromosomes, and if both alleles are broken then the hosta dies but it can live just fine with one good gene and one broken one. These genes that control chloroplast development live in the cell nucleus and are passed down from generation to generation.

The genes are inherited by what they call simple Mendelian Genetics; you know that old Punnett square thing. Cross a green hosta with a yellow hosta and half of the seedlings are green and half are yellow. But cross a yellow hosta with a yellow hosta and one quarter of the seedlings will be green, half will be yellow and one quarter will come up light yellow and then promptly die. The latter is the lethal pairing of two broken genes.

I, being a scientist by training and a little skeptical, have produced these ratios time and again by hand pollinated crosses. It is really neat when the science works. I always thought this would make a great science fair project for elementary school students, showing how the ratios really work



Hosta 'Pebble Creek'

using hosta seedlings as the test species but could never get one of my kids to take that route.

So gold hostas are not really sick, they cannot be cured of their genetic defect, they are just broken in a very appealing way. Half of their chloroplasts, the organelles that capture light and turn it into their food, created are normal, green, and half are broken, yellow. So what does this mean for the plant and for the gardener?

It would seem that trying to be a normal vigorous hosta with half your chloroplasts tied behind your back might be difficult or even impossible and for some gold hosta seedlings it is. They are just too yellow and may even bleach to white and melt away in too much sun and just limp along in the shade. But some are just fine it seems and grow into huge, sturdy plants. Some gold hostas do require extra care while others thrive on neglect. So what's a hosta collector to do?

A caring gardener might surmise that gold hostas need more light than green hostas to make the same amount of food since they may be running their factories half staffed. This kind of logic, (or maybe the myth that light colors like sun and dark colors like shade), leads to the idea that all gold hostas like or even need more sun than green ones. I think hostas in general would like more light than in which we tend to grow them. They do seem to flourish in sunny Northern gardens. But a hosta's likes and dislikes are not determined by any single gene, even a broken one, but by the sum of the thousands and thousands of genes that make the entire factory run.

Some gold hostas are really blue hostas in every other way just with a single dominant lethal mutation. If they look like *H. sieboldiana* seedlings with those large round leaves all

cupped and puckered then they probably are with their fondness for a cool spot in the garden. Their growth rate might be slow, but not because they are gold, because they are 'Tokudama' hybrids. Some others however may be fast growing little yellow *H. sieboldii* hybrids that love the sun just as much as their parents do. So it is really the sum of a hosta's genes that determines how much sun it will tolerate no matter how much we think it needs.

I have frequently been asked, "Does this gold hosta stay gold all season long?" My response is, "No it will green up some in the summer but that is a good thing." If it stayed that bright yellow it would melt away in summer's heat. Hostas are smart they know that too. Most all gold hostas, maybe all hostas even green ones, do not stay the same color all summer. So instead of melting away when the temperatures reach the upper 80's and 90's many yellow hostas "green up". Some call them viridescens, becoming green.

So how do these hostas overcome their single dominant lethal mutation? Do they fix the gene somehow? No, hostas are much cleverer than that. Like NASA they have backup systems. At a certain temperature, say 90 degrees another backup gene begins to make a similar protein to the one that is missing and does produce functioning chloroplasts even if they are not quite the same. Based on the systems in other monocots like corn, hostas may have as many as 6 of these backup genes all triggered by temperature.

Interestingly enough hosta hybridizing has demonstrated this multiple backup system to some extent. I have found that in the second generation of a cross of gold hostas you can reduce the amount of "greening up" that occurs. In other words the hostas stay more yellow or yellow longer, a positive trait for collectors if not the hosta. 'Whiskey Sour' from the first generation of seedlings from my cross of *H. yingeri* and the yellow, 'Ogon Tsushima' emerges bright yellow but then turns greener with summer's heat fairly quickly. (Interestingly in areas without that heat like the Pacific Northwest it will stay yellow and be less vigorous.) The second generation including 'Strawberry Banana Smoothie' stays yellow even in the heat only turning slightly greener. The backup systems have not been mutated in this case but just selected against. Knock out a backup or two and your yellow hosta will stay yellow longer.

Once upon a time there were only green hostas. So where did the first gold hostas come from? Who hybridized the first one? Well, they were not hybridized, they were discovered. They were found in the wild or in nurseries and gardens more than once all with that single dominant lethal mutation. Genetic mutations happen all the time but we rarely notice them

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FAQ

I am a very private person. My longevity in Hostadom has fortunately or unfortunately granted me a small measure of celebrity and I am now, I guess because I am turning gray, frequently asked about my personal involvement with hostas. That simply means that I get asked these seemingly simple questions that really have several paragraph answers. Here are the obvious ones and maybe next time we can dig a little deeper, maybe not.

Q. How did you get into hostas?

A. I wish I had some excitingly glamorous answer, a love at first sight moment. It would make a better story. But for better or worse, and so far the better has far outweighed the worse, it was a business decision. Hostas were the right plant at the right time for me to build my nursery around.

I started with azaleas and rhododendrons in my backyard nursery but I soon found that they needed a lot of space and required a lot of watering. I then discovered perennials and their smaller pot size, and sought out Loleta Powell and her garden showroom of all kinds of plant material. I spent hours with her talking while she never stopped her endless weeding. She was so kind to me and encouraged me to try the large groups of collectable perennials, iris, her favorite, peonies, daylilies, and hostas.

I soon decided that hostas were a new and up and coming group of plants, and with the tissue culture of them just beginning they were becoming more available to the nursery trade. Besides I soon learned that I would rather divide hostas in the shade than daylilies in the hot North Carolina summer sun. So hostas it was.

Q. How long have you been in the hosta business?

A. This is the 36th year that I have been selling hostas.



Hosta 'Fairy Dust'

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Singing the praises of the blues

The longer I grow hostas the more I love the blue ones. There is nothing in the garden that has that rich blue color, so frosty on a bright spring morning. No other hostas have the deeply ribbed texture and heavy substance that speaks of permanence and tranquillity. Blue hostas create a mood of excitement in the spring and calm in the summer. They are the most regal of all.

(But for some reason, we have fewer blue hostas in the catalogue and nursery than we have in past years. I think we were too blue for a while and now I have overcompensated. The nursery just wasn't flashy enough, so now I have too many yellows and golds. I'm sure I will want to remedy the situation once the blue hostas begin to sing when spring arrives.)

For all their mystic qualities, blue hostas are just green hostas with wax. They are hostas that produce a white wax from their epidermal cells as part of the photosynthetic process, sort of a byproduct of an overabundance of sugar produced. These cells will continue to make the wax until the leaf has reached full size or is "mature". Then the photosynthetic rate decreases and the process of wax production is turned off and can not be turned on again in those leaves. This is why blue hostas turn green. They stop mak-

ing the wax.

Most all the blue hostas we grow have *H. sieboldiana* or 'Tokudama' in their background and their ability to make the white wax comes from those hostas. The bluest group of hostas, the "Tardianas", is a cross of 'Tardiflora' and 'Elegans'. Other hosta species produce white wax on the backs of their leaves and can be useful in the hybridization of blue hostas. *H. hypoleuca* yielded 'Azure Snow' and 'Carolina Blue' has *H. pycnophylla* in its background. White wax on a dark green background produces the bluest hostas.

Unfortunately, like all creatures, blue hostas have their genetic faults. While *H. sieboldiana* and 'Tokudama' gave them the genes to produce white wax they also gave them the genes for a slow growth rate, only a few number of leaves, and early dormancy. Both parents are "short season" hostas. They emerge late in the spring, flush out 3-4 leaves per shoot and bloom early. They are really designed to be three to four month plants. The creation of a "short season" hosta with the "long season" 'Tardiflora'. 'Tardiflora' emerges early in the spring, flushes out 3-4 leaves and blooms very late. The "Tardianas" generally then fall somewhere in between their parents in bloom time and hold up much longer into



Hosta 'Blue Perfection'

the season than 'Elegans'.

The "Tardianas" while very blue in color in spring have the drawback of pro-

ducing usually only one flush of leaves. As these leaves reach maturity, both in size, (to what extent they are going to expand that season) and photosynthetic activity, they stop making the wax that makes them blue. To keep a hosta blue all season one of two things must happen. Either the hosta must produce wax all season or it must make new photosynthetically active leaves in several flushes over the summer. The first option would require the hosta to be almost evergreen and would require a major change in hosta biology. It would probably require many mutations.

The second option is obtainable. There are hostas, especially those from *H. plantaginea*, which produce 3-4 flushes of foliage each year. A cross of say 'Halcyon' and *H. plantaginea* may produce a hosta that continued to make new leaves late in the summer and thus stayed blue until it flowered in August. 'Fragrant Blue' is probably just such a plant. It does send out multiple flushes of leaves, the new ones over the old, so that the hosta appears bluer longer. Unfortunately it has other genetic traits that keep it from being a great hosta. However 'Blue Perfection', my blue sport of 'Ambrosia' ^{PPAF}, might just be that fragrant-flowered hosta that does exactly what we want,

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Why We Love Green Hostas

I have been told by several large nurseries that they cannot sell green hostas. We sell lots of green hostas, in fact most of my hybridizing efforts are geared toward producing solid colored hostas. Currently, yellow, or gold, as we used to call them, hostas are my primary favorites because they look so good with purple or red petioles and scapes. But believe it or not, at one time not too long ago I was most infatuated by solid green hostas. I did after all select one as the Alex J. Summers Award winner, 'Corkscrew'.

These days we are spoiled by variegation. Think of all the new colors sports have given us, now with wide margins and splashed leaf centers. Hybridizers have opened the 'Pandora's Box' of variegation and now there are rows and rows of streaked hostas in their gardens.

But if you have been growing hostas for over twenty years you can fondly remember a time, like I do, when most of the hostas in your collection were green or maybe a little blue-green. I remember ordering a big box of hostas from Gunther Stark back in the 1980's to fill a new bed I had made. They were all green ones; maybe a few had narrow white edges. They all went in the bed together and I spent hours comparing and contrasting.

That is the real beauty of green hostas; they make us take a closer look. How are they different? The differences are subtle. We see clearly the leaf margin, not distracted by color. Any ruffling is magnified. Ruffling overwhelms the eye when we gaze on 'Niagara Falls'. We look at its white-margined sport, 'Bridal Falls', an equally impressive hosta, we see color first and maybe second and third. It is the smallest details that surprise us. Margins that recurve just a little, revealing a narrow white line of the wax on the underside of the leaf, are an especially delightful discovery when looking at an all green hosta.

We see the veins more clearly in green hostas, too. Variegation frequently hides hosta veins but green hostas show them off proudly. Think of 'Elatior' with its long cross-stitched veins, the main attraction not just a sideshow as they are on its sport 'Vic-

tory'. We know large hostas have eye-catching veins, especially *H. montana* hybrids, but even *H. plantaginea* with its relatively plain light green leaves have wonderful veins that define the leaf as a hosta.

I love waxy hostas. I love the heavy white wax that turns a green hosta blue but more than that I love that shiny, shiny wax that well, makes a hosta leaf shine. 'Doubled Up' is the best I have seen, although many fragrant flowered hostas will mirror your reflection back to you if you use your imagine just a little. While the regularly spaced ruffling first draws you to 'Candy Dish' it is its shine that makes it a very special hosta.

I like my green hostas to dance, too, to do a little twist. 'Corkscrew' and 'Tongue Twister', and now 'Twist Tie' are my best so far. I only fantasize how they might look with a narrow white margin. Will it enhance the way we see the twisting or blind us to it? (To be honest the white edge of 'Bachelor Party' is a dramatic improvement over 'Bridegroom'.) 'Tears of Joy' is a miniature twister and its medium green color would be overlooked if not for its resemblance to a mini 'Praying Hands'. By the way, does the variegation of 'Praying Hands' reinforce the twisting or detract from it?

Puckering, sear suckering, waffling, whichever is your favorite term for the quilted look of some hosta leaves, does not enhance green hostas as much as other colored ones. It is the shadows created by the vertical walls of the puckers that give a hosta leaf a three dimensional look. The more contrast in color, light to dark, the more sculpted the appearance of the leaf. I think puckers are most effective on yellow leaves, the yellow making a stark contrast to the dark shadows. Blue leaves are good too, because the white wax often highlights the color differences but the contrast is not as good on green hosta leaves. I would rather not have them on my green hostas as they distract from the margins, veins, and shiny wax.

The introduction of red and purple petioles to hostas has made green hostas today's stars. Beginning with 'Red October' and 'Cinnamon' Sticks' and now 'Plum Pudding' and 'Sugar Plum' purple-petioled hostas have made green hostas eye-catchers. Add to

that the red petioles and scapes of 'Beet Salad' and the blushing red leaves of 'First Blush', who would have known that one day green hostas would be some of the most sought after of all. You just never know!

Finally, green hostas make us wait for their flowers. We instinctively know that we have been growing hostas like *H. ventricosa*, which by the way has a beautiful velvety leaf surface, for hundreds of years for more than the green foliage. It must have special flowers that are worth waiting to see. (The fact that it sets thousands of seed may have something to do with it, too.) If you can wait all the way until a warm August evening there are the huge fragrant blooms of *H. plantaginea* to thrill you. 'Grape Fizz', with its leathery leaves makes a beautiful bouquet of buds in late summer. Many of the really late flowering hostas hailing from *H. longipes*, like 'One Man's Treasure', are a special treat with their purple flowers and purple scapes. Many years ago I saw a huge border of 'Tardiflora' in Champaign, IL in full bloom in October. It was amazing!

We love green hostas because they make small differences in the details become big. They also teach us more about the beauty of hostas and sharpen our eye as we compare and contrast them in the garden. True, they are not always identifiable without a label and often serve only as foils for showier plants in the garden but we could not live without them. I couldn't anyway.

I like to say that it is variegation that first attracts us to hostas, color. Then we fall in love with the blue ones, usually the bigger the better. Within a few years the garden needs some brightening and "gold fever" strikes. This is usually short lived; just a season or two and then we mature to collecting green hostas. Our eyes are now more discriminating, wanting to enjoy the intimate details of every hosta leaf and green hostas reward them time after time. If you are stuck in this green phase of hosta collecting right now, don't panic, bright yellow leaves with bright red petioles will be screaming for your attention again next spring. For now, enjoy the reflective calm, while you have it.



Hosta 'Beet Salad'

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SINGING THE PRAISES OF THE BLUES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

produce those several flushes of waxy blue leaves throughout the summer. It figures, hostas would solve this problem for us themselves through their own sporting.

The problem with hybridizing is that every good trait that you capture in a seedling seems to come with an unwanted one. I do not mean they are genetically linked in any way but the cute little mini always seems to have a 24 inch floppy scape. For that reason I do not use certain species in my breeding. I love the ruffling that *H. hypoleuca* gives. (Have you seen Hans Hansen's newest 'Neptune' seedlings?) But I hate the growth rate and limited number of leaves that it gives more. I use *H. pycnophylla* instead. It brings with it poor substance and floppy scapes but I can take care of that in a generation or two.

I am often asked what the bluest hosta is. Frankly, I do not know. Hostas are ever changing. The first week in May it may be 'Baby Blue Eyes', the next week it may be 'Jetstream', and 'Hovercraft' the next. The "Tardianas" and their children are still the very good everywhere, even though they have now unfortunately become "old fashioned" and maybe a little plain. Don Dean's 'Pewterware' and 'Titanium' may be the new standards with their ruffled leaves. .

If white wax causes a green hosta to become blue then will more white wax make a

hosta bluer? Well, not exactly, it makes the hosta whiter. Blue hostas that produce heavy amounts of wax like 'Powderpuff' and 'Starlight' appear to be a frosted, light blue color not a richer blue. If the border of 'Touch of Class' and its sport 'Bulletproof' are any indication, richer blue colors may be achieved in blue tetraploid hostas sometime in the future.

Finally, how do we get the most "blue for the buck" out of our blue hostas? Is it all genetics or does environment play a role? We are frequently told that blue hostas prefer shade to sun. Based on their *H. sieboldiana* genetics, blue hostas generally need a cool, moist spot in the garden. In addition, hot sun may melt the white wax, reducing your blue hostas back to green ones again or at least blue and green streaked ones. However, any blue hosta will produce more white wax in bright light than in total shade. Try it. Plant one clump of 'Halcyon' in a very shady location and plant another where it gets at least a couple of hours of direct sunlight. The one in the sun will be bluer! Because of the increased direct sunlight the plant will photosynthesize at a higher rate and thus produce more white wax. This extra wax may provide your hosta with a defense mechanism to protect its leaves from overheating since by the plant becoming blue instead of green, blue sunlight, which is higher energy than red, is reflected and not absorbed.

When siting blue hostas for their maximum effect, the trick is to try to split the difference between sun and shade. Cool



Hosta 'Hovercraft'

morning sun is better than hot afternoon sun or even an hour or two in the middle of the day. The bottom of the garden where cool air may collect overnight is better than up against the west side of the house. A couple of hours of direct sunlight will yield bluer hostas and they will recover that blue color faster when actively growing in the spring than those hidden in the shade.

Now, here's a question for you. Do hostas stay bluer longer into the summer in Minnesota because it is cooler there or do they stay bluer longer just because they come up that much later in the spring?

MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH GOLD HOSTAS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

because they generally do not change the color of the hosta leaf like in this case.. 'Ogon Tsushima' or "Golden Tsushimensis" the yellow parent of my red hosta line including 'Mango Salsa' and 'Peach Salsa' was found in this way in Japan.

Many of our larger gold hostas descend from 'Frances Williams' and 'Tokudama Aureomebulosa', especially the ones introduced by Paul Aden. Before Aden's work with Klehm Nursery there were really very few yellow or gold hostas available. 'August Moon', 'Piedmont Gold', and 'Aspen Gold' were the exceptions to this. Many of our smaller gold hostas like Aden's 'Chartreuse Wiggles' and Russ O'Hara's 'Feather Boa', 'Yellow Boa', 'Gaga', 'Estrellita', etc. came from yellow forms of *H. sieboldii*, plants like 'Subcrocea', 'Kabitan' and 'Wogon Gold'.

Paul Aden registered 32 gold hostas and marketed most all of them. Even though his first love was variegated plants, ironically he introduced a group of hostas that would set the standard for all gold hostas for years to come with such plants as 'City Lights', 'Daybreak', 'Gold Edger', 'Gold Regal', 'Golden

Prayers', 'Golden Waffles', 'Little Aurora', 'Midas Touch', 'Sum and Substance' 'Sun Power', 'White Vision' and 'Zounds'. While the ultimate origin of some of these plants may remain a mystery, Aden did give them very marketable names and gave Hostadom a good rush of gold fever.

The first gold hostas were hosta mutations and many of the newer ones are hosta sports. Hostas have figured out a way on their own to take a plain all gold hosta and fancy it up, giving it a green margin or a green leaf center. 'August Moon' may have been the first hosta, or at least the first modern hosta to learn this trick and it seems to do it quite easily and often. It often starts as just a dark green streak through the leaf but as those green cells out compete the gold cells in the meristem the new leaves may become greener and greener. The result when stabilized is a gold 'August Moon' with a green margin, 'September Sun' or with a green leaf center, 'Mayan Moon'.

Interestingly, this "fixing" of the mutation seems to be caused by what geneticists call "crossing over". When the chromosomes replicate themselves, make copies of themselves, during cell division sometimes they break and then reform. This process can make new cells that have two good genes and "fix"

the mutation. It seems certain chromosomes may break and reform more easily than others and thus we see lots of this chromosomal recombination in gold hostas. This tendency to cross over easily seems to be inheritable too, since 'Honey Pie' from 'September Sun' will produce lots of green streaks with regularity, hence my new green-centered hosta 'Honey Bear'.

Finally, as hosta hybridizers begin to create gold hostas that are fully tetraploid math starts to work in their favor. Normal, diploid gold hostas, have like we said two sets of chromosomes, and one gold gene and one green gene. Tetraploid hostas have four sets of chromosomes and thus four genes with which to work. Diploid hostas can only, (at least in this situation) give us one color of yellow or gold from a cross. Tetraploid hostas can give us three colors, or shades, of yellow and gold. (Here are the gene combinations: gggg Green, Gggg Gold 1, GGgg Gold 2, GGGg Gold 3, and GGGG Lethal.) This will allow many new yellow colors in hostas as the breeding continues.

No discussion of gold hostas would be complete without mentioning 'Sum and Substance'. 'Sum and Substance' is neither diploid nor tetraploid; by some miracle of bee magic it is triploid, having three sets of chro-

mosomes. As you might guess this causes all kinds of problems when the chromosomes go looking for dancing partners during cell division. Whereas diploid hostas add chromosomes to become tetraploid, 'Sum and Substance' tends to lose them or at least parts of them. This has resulted in a huge number of sports, ranging from tiny ones that will not grow, (they must have lost something very important), to huge variegated ones with green margins and leaf centers.

'Sum and Substance' deserves a whole article to itself or maybe even a book of its own, but I am running out of space in this little newspaper so that will have to wait for another time. It should be said however that maybe no other gold hosta has had a bigger influence on the way we love hostas. Its size alone, its huge dinner plate leaves, its substance, (did its name coin the term?) and its distinctiveness have made it easily recognizable and a household name. It has made us believe that gold hostas are not sick, for how could a plant that big possibly be sick? Every spring it shows us, more than any other hosta, the magic of our favorite plant growing from zero to seven feet across in two weeks. That is really why I love hostas, especially the yellow ones with red veins.

FAQ

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As I said above I started when there were very few hostas available and have grown up with tissue culture to be a major player in Hostadom these days. In those first years, I did divide most of my hosta stock to produce new plants for the coming year but now we rely only on hosta liners and save all that labor and cost. My wholesale niche then was small blue hostas, 'Blue Cadet', 'Serendipity' and 'Pearl Lake', which all multiplied quickly.

I do feel that fate has had a lot to do with my life with hostas, facts like when I first was getting started the AHS National Convention was in Raleigh in 1982. We had trouble filling two buses that year but all the hosta gods attended

and I was hooked. It was a simpler time, a small enough world to be able to intellectually get your head around everything hostas.

I hope to be in the hosta business another 10 years. I still have things I wish to accomplish, new hostas to hybridize, others to introduce for the up and coming hybridizers, and to keep this party going. Hostas are supposed to be fun and I will do all I can to keep the fun coming.

Q. What is your favorite hosta?

A. For most hosta folks this is a pretty easy question. I've noticed that usually their choice is an old favorite, one that has probably been their favorite for much of their time growing hostas. (That might explain the Popularity Poll.) For me, of course, the answer is more difficult and really ever changing. My favorite hosta today may be second best as soon as all my hostas emerge this spring.

I live in the future, function in the present and deal with the past. On any given day my favorite hosta may be some

little seedling of mine that has just caught my eye. I may love its potential more than anything else. But when asked this question, the response should probably be a hosta with a name, and one the questioner might actually be able to have.

So, now I have an answer prepared in advance. I make a conscience effort to have a favorite hosta that at least has a name so I am ready to go. Right now, my favorite hosta is 'Fairy Dust', my new bright yellow spikey mini.

Why? First it is a really good looking plant even as a liner and that is much more important to me now that I'm in the liner business. It stays yellow and stays small. Finally, it is the child of a seedling of 'Corkscrew' and 'Green Eyes' that I had potted in a round ceramic pot with a narrow opening and killed from the lack of understanding that it wasn't getting watered properly because of the shape of the pot. I guess there is still a lot of emotion there. Anyway, 'Fairy Dust' is a really cool hosta and my current favorite, today.

In praise of white-edged hostas

Edited from an article in the "Gossip Jr."

In the last issue of "The Gossip Jr.," I rambled on at length about my dislike of white-centered hostas and my confusion over their current popularity. I only thought it reasonable then that I should follow that up with some praise for white-edged hostas. To me there is no more elegant hosta than one that has a crisp, clean pure white margin and a deep green leaf center. Add heart shaped leaves and you approach hosta perfection. Beside the definition of variegated hosta in the dictionary is a picture of a single clump of 'Francee' in a shade garden or a border of 'Undulata Albomarginata' along a sunny sidewalk.

Unfortunately, maybe ironically, as white-centered hostas have reached the heights of popularity, the popularity of white-edged hostas has plummeted. I have several theories for this. First, new white margined hostas are not necessarily better, (look and grow better), than the ones we have grown for decades. How do you beat the classics, 'Francee', 'Frosted Jade', 'Diamond Tiara', and even 'Allan P. McConnell'? In addition, most of the newer hybrids emerge as yellow margined hostas and then become white only in the heat of summer. Many of the Lachmans' fine plants suffer from this flaw.

As a nurseryman sometimes I think hosta popularity has more to do with what a hosta looks like in a gallon nursery pot than what it matures into in the garden. It's what a hosta looks like when you select (buy) it

that determines its popularity. This is certainly true of white-centered hostas, why not white-edged hostas? While white-centered hostas are cute in a small pot, white-edged hostas tend to all look the same. Only a plant as outrageous as 'Ginsu Knife' stands out as unique.

And then there is 'Patriot'. 'Patriot' is a great garden center container plant, if only an average garden plant. It has however unreasonably raised the bar for all new white-edged hostas. As 'Francee' with a wider, brighter margin it outshines all the other margined hostas in the sales area. The introduction of 'Minuteman' just makes matters worse and now has even reached the point of overkill. It is almost impossible to hybridize white-margined hostas that can compete with these tetraploids.

All this puts hosta hybridizers in a dilemma. Most all variegated seedlings begin life as unstable streaked plants. Over a number of years they become "stable" light-centered or light-margined plants. Traditionally, the margined forms were considered the most valuable (introducible) of the two because of their bigger size, stability, and better growth rates. Now that these margined forms have become unpopular (hard to sell), hybridizers are not sure they should introduce them. Many have moved on to introducing streaked hostas, about which I am not thrilled, but that will have to wait for another "Gossip" article. The future in hybridizing white-edged hostas may very well lie in producing wide margined tetraploids. Then again if they can't outshine 'Patriot',



Hosta 'Razzmatazz'

that may be futile too.

So what are the best of this underappreciated group. In other words, if I was just beginning to collect hostas which white-margined hostas could I not live without? Let's look at this group by group and for this let's wave the pure white rule because they really are rare.

Here are the classics. From largest to smallest, 'Frosted Jade', 'Francee', 'Diamond Tiara', and 'Allan P. McConnell' are all great landscape plants. I can do without 'Undulata Albomarginata' and little 'Louisa'. These are all "pure white" margined hostas that have performed well for three decades.

If you have a slug problem with 'Diamond Tiara', you can try 'Pearl Tiara', the tetraploid form with more substance, but you will have to sacrifice some vigor in return.

Maybe because I garden in the South, I love white-edged fragrant-flowered hostas. While many do look very similar, I enjoy their subtle differences. Again from largest to smallest, 'Sugar and Cream' and 'Savannah' have great growth rates and size. 'Fragrant Queen' is much showier 'Fragrant Dream' but a little slower to mature. 'Austin Dickinson' has better color and flowers than

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Editorial: Underappreciated hostas

From the latest "Gossip Jr."

Disclaimer: In this article I intend in no way to diminish the elegance or grandeur of the fine ancient hosta 'Krossa Regal', a favorite of my good friend Mark Zilis. I do believe it has been surpassed by newer cultivars and maybe our continued love for it is only nostalgic. If it one of your favorite hostas please take no offense; everyone knows I have very weird taste in hostas.

I do not want to beat this to death but some hostas are loved more than others. Or looking at it another way some hostas are just plain underappreciated. This is true for the general gardening public and hosta collectors as well. The home gardener has a picture of any hosta as being about the size of a bushel basket. That is why they do not really know how to use minis and are scared to death of giants. On the other hand, hosta collectors these days love those cute little miniature hostas with which they fill all sorts of shapes and sizes of containers and ironically at the same time seek out the largest hostas they can find.

Gold or yellow hostas have a negative reputation with nursery folks, maybe even more so than green hostas. Their customers, they think, see them as sick, maybe needing a little swig of Miracle-Gro. I have no trouble selling gold hostas. Bright yellow leaves in early spring are always a standout in the garden or on the venting table. Green hostas also move pretty well for me especially with purple petioles. I never thought we would sell all the hundreds of 'Plum Nutty' we had in the nursery at one time but next year folks will ask for it and they will all be gone.

Now I digress. I swore to myself that I would never do this again, so I'll just do it a little this time. Yes, in my mind I am critiquing the Popularity Poll, again. It happens every year. I just got it in the mail in the most recent issue of *The Hosta Journal*. My initial thought is always, "Hey did all these folks copy off each other's ballots?" The poll is almost the same every year for like the past twenty years. In the past I have analyzed in

detail the trends and changes in the poll for you but this time as promised I will not be that tedious.

There are a few hostas on this poll however that I feel are over appreciated. Really, is 'Sagae' the second most exciting hosta in Hostadom? I do not think so. Yes, a large clump of it is impressive especially when it has good blue color and yellow margins, but



Hosta 'Urchin'

number 2, really. And what in the world is 'Krossa Regal' still doing on the list at all? I'd rather see 'Frances Williams' with its rusty leaves back at number 1 rather than see 'Krossa Regal' on the list anywhere. I rarely see a nice clump of it anymore and really 'Tenryu' is a better growing and much more attractive plant.

And forgive me, just one more... please get 'Pandora's Box' off the mini list. Are there really that many of them still alive? Let's have an organized campaign not to vote for it any longer. Beauty is not everything; a very popular hosta should have a life expectancy of

more than a year or two. I know I am exaggerating (maybe a little) but you know what I am talking about. Alright, I'm done.

In the accompanying article in *The Hosta Journal* Josh Spece much more politely states that "for years the AHS Popularity Poll results have been predictable." (Copying off each other's ballots?) He goes on to list a few underappreciated hostas that almost made the list. What do you think? Do you like these better than 'Krossa Regal'? Here are his five that are "gaining popularity".

I can't believe it but for all the hoopla 'Empress Wu' cannot crack the Top 25. Doesn't everyone in the country have at least one plant of it? My favorite Mediterranean restaurant has a few decorative pots of hostas on their patio, several 'June' of course, number 1 on the poll, and some miniaturized 'Empress Wu' with large leaves. Maybe size is not everything, when it is not huge, and I rarely see it really huge like the photo, it is a hosta that you could walk right by without looking for the label. Still, reputation alone should probably get it to at least number 25.

'Autumn Frost' ^{pp} also has a very wide distribution and is an extremely beautiful hosta with its wide almost orangey-yellow margins. It is a tetraploid form of 'First Frost' (number 6) which itself has fairly wide yellow margins. I do like the way 'Autumn Frost' looks in a container in vending but in the garden it always is smaller than my expectations. It suffers from a slow growth rate, because of its mutated ploidy, and is always a little disappointing. I think I want it to be 'First Frost' size. I would not vote it in myself.

'Old Glory' in contrast grows very well, making a very impressive, sturdy clump that holds up well even in some sun. I used to sell it in the nursery and it made a good attractive nursery plant but it didn't sell as well as I thought it should. Why? The color was a little muddy, unlike the fine photo in *The Hosta Journal*. and it seemed to lack a little substance for such a large plant. But I like it, but I also like 'Summer Serenade' better. How many of you grow that one? You should, it's underappreciated for sure.

'Earth Angel' is a great hosta, a great

sport from a great seedling, 'Blue Angel'. In the South it is more impressive than 'Sagae' with its huge leaves and its wide spreading clump. It also does not suffer from those late spring freezes that plague our region. It wouldn't hurt my feelings if it came in at number 2; I think it is that good.

'Bridal Falls', a white margined form of 'Niagara Falls' is the last of Josh's mentioned hostas. I was so excited when I first saw this hosta at Jan van den Top's nursery in Holland. It is very, very beautiful. I think once we start to see large clumps of it, it will move up the list, but maybe not.

Here is the problem. We like our hostas to have lighter colored leaf centers and darker colored margins, not the other way around. We like strong colors, that's why the home football team wears dark jerseys and they make the visitors wear white. Think about green numerals bordered in white, those players are pretty weak looking compared to opponents with white numerals on crimson or navy blue. It's psychological, the stronger the colors, the tougher the team.

I have two hostas that I can sell all day long. In fact I can never get enough of them. 'Sno Cone' and 'Sharp Dressed Man' are both white-centered hostas with dark green margins, the second favorite color combination of all hosta lovers. The bolder, stronger, yellow-centered, blue bordered hosta sports produced by hostas themselves, not hybridizers, are the number one fan favorites. But flip those colors around and white-margined hostas look very plain in comparison, maybe even becoming all the same to the eye. I call this "white edge disease" and several really great hostas have it and it affects their popularity and marketability.

Here are five underappreciated hostas in my nursery this year, all with white margins.

1. 'Sugar and Spice' This to me is almost the perfect hosta but I can't sell it for \$10. It has it all, wide iridescent white borders on shiny green leaves, fragrant flowers and a pleasing compact habit. It grows well and blooms late. I know some of you think slugs

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IN PRAISE OF WHITE-EDGED HOSTAS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

'So Sweet' or his sister Emily but I just might have them all.

As much as I love white-margined fragrant flowered hostas, I am not that enamored with white-edged *H. sieboldiana*, seedlings or sports. (My customers hold the opposite view.) The problem is probably more with where I grow hostas than the hostas themselves. 'Northern Exposure' and 'American Halo' make excellent wide-margined plants without being tetraploid so that they grow into large impressive clumps. Jim Wilkins has produced some beauties from the 'Dorothy Benedict' line with 'Spartan Glory' the brightest but 'His Honor' the most elegant. The Lachman's 'Robert Frost' is a favorite of mine and now easily found.

Speaking of Bill and Eleanor Lachman, no discussion of white-edged hostas can go very far without their name coming up. They simply have produced the most diverse and beautiful group of really, cream-edged hostas. They put white edges on "Tardianas", *H. sieboldiana*, *H. montana*, *H. plantaginea*, and *H. sieboldii* and probably others. For me the cream-edged "Tardianas" are their most significant contribution to hostas since sports of "Tardianas" are fairly rare, although 'First Frost' and 'El Nino' have become extremely popular.

Just for fun I have listed the white, or cream-edged hostas from the Lachmans. I do not need to have all these in the garden but if I did it would sure make an interesting collection. Most are available, most are relatively inexpensive. I have grouped them by similar type so that you can be sure to collect some of each type. My favorites are

marked with an *.

The larger cultivars include:

'Brave Amherst'*
'Cavalcade'
'Eventide'*
'Hampshire County'
'Happy Valley'
'Lake Hitchcock'
'Leola Fraim'
'Lonesome Pine'
'Mount Holyoke'
'Mount Tom'*
'Robert Frost'*.

The small to medium "Tardiana" types include:

'Border Bandit'
'Chantilly Lace'
'Cherub'*
'Crusader'
'Gay Blade'*
'Lacy Belle'
'Moon River'
'Shoon Boat'
'Tambourine'*
'Torchlight'*.

Their small, often cute, hostas include:

'Cream Cheese'
'Crepe Suzette'*
'Crystal Charm'
'Curly Locks'
'Little Wonder'*
'Tea and Crumpets'
'Verna Jean'
'Waving Winds'.

The fragrant flowered hostas are:

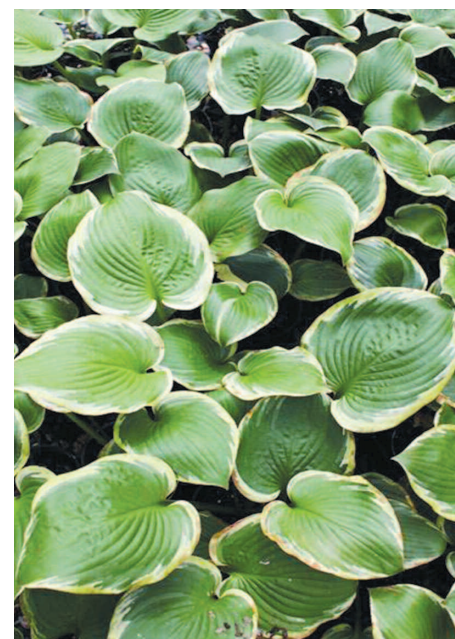
'Austin Dickinson'*
'Emily Dickinson'
'Mistress Mable'.

Study the fine hostas listed above. They are result of an excellent hybridizing program, diverse in size and parentage if not always in appearance in the garden. It is hard to believe that the introduction of 'Patriot' and the sheer numbers of it produced so dramatically reduced the commercial importance of these plants. In truth, the Lachmans' hostas in spite of their true beauty are hard plants to sell in the nursery. They are not only outshined by 'Patriot' and the like, but they are also too similar in appearance in a one gallon pot. Most all the Lachmans' hostas are now 25 years old or more but still they set the standard for fine hybridized white-edged hostas.

And what about the fine white-edged hostas hybridized by Dick Ward. Using some of the same parents as Kevin Vaughn and the Lachmans, especially 'Pinstripe Sister', he has produced some wonderful seedlings that have really never become household names despite being introduced and marketed to the wholesale trade by Q & Z nursery. His special contribution to white-edged hostas has been his small or miniature cultivars that have very good vigor. 'Firefly', 'Pixie Vamp', my favorite, 'Thumbelina', 'Toto', and 'Winsome' are all winners.

Today, many of the best cream or white-margined hostas are sports although I am always on the lookout for a good showy seedling. 'Victory' and 'Earth Angel', which fades to white, have become "huge" additions to the hosta market. I love 'Sugar and Spice' but it does not receive the same amount of love as its larger cousins.

With the mini craze and the invasion of the "mice", several very small hostas with white margins have become very popular. 'Frosted Mouse Ears', 'Mighty Mouse', and



Hosta 'Stan the Man'

our new 'Mouse Madness' are all white-edged sports of 'Blue Mouse Ears'. They are three distinct permutations of white-edged mice one brighter in the spring and another brighter in summer and the third somewhere in between. 'Little Devil' is a good grower and 'Cookie Crumbs' is still a favorite of mine. 'Bachelor Party' has uniquely twisted heart-shaped leaves bordered in pure white and makes a great container plant.

So next spring stop and give those white-edged hostas a second look. I guarantee they will look better in your garden than they do in a gallon pot. I also have no doubt that they will look better than those awful white-centered hostas you bought last year!

UNDERAPPRECIATED HOSTAS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

when you here the name as is the case with its ironically named parent 'Invincible', but home gardeners do not. Actually, slugs are not really a problem on any hostas throughout much of the South. I love the plant but it has "white edge disease". Customers pass it by and say, "Oh, I have that one at home already."

2. 'Victory' How can a hosta that has been AHGA Hosta of the Year and is currently number 7 in the AHS Popularity Poll possibly be underappreciated? It is the fourth light-margined hosta in the poll and the other three, 'Sagae' (ugh), 'Liberty' and 'First Frost' all have blue leaf centers and yellow margins. (Yes, those margins can be bleached to white but then they are no longer as attractive either are they?) Yellow trumps white, blue trumps

green. Yellow and blue is the strongest color combination in hostas, just look at the list.

'Victory' may also be too big for its own good. I have never seen a mass planting of it and most gardens can only hold one. Most home gardeners do not want a seven foot hosta by their front door or mailbox much less two. What they want is a three foot wide hosta, a very manageable medium to large clump that will fill several spots in the landscape from borders to specimens. They want them all to grow the same.

3. 'Leather and Lace' While 'Victory' may be too big, 'Leather and Lace' might be too small for the home gardener and too big for the hosta collector. Blue hostas with white margins are rare and one with very ruffled white margins might be unique. Still the colors do not pop like 'First Frost' for some reason and the plant is easily passed over.

4. 'Brentwood Blues' has similar characteristics to 'Leather and Lace' but is smaller

and grows much faster. If it were a true mini it would be a great hosta but it becomes one of the Shadrack's "very small hostas". Size does matter, even a few inches. A sport of the ruffled 'Rhythm and Blues', its white margin tends to negate some of the ruffling of its parent, a common occurrence with this type of sporting unfortunately. If its leaves were more heart-shaped then I think it would be more endearing also but such is life.

5. 'Tropicana' I would have all the above hostas in my garden, they are certainly worthy of some of that precious real estate, 'Sugar and Spice' and 'Leather and Lace' in the ground and 'Victory' and 'Brentwood Blues' in containers but maybe not 'Tropicana'. Yes, it has "white edge disease" but also something more. The color of the leaf center is somewhere between yellow and green. Remember what I said about strong colors, yellow hostas with white margins are very beautiful to me but most folks want more contrast in color.

That is why 'Minuteman' is immune to "white edge disease"; it has a very dark green center to go with that wide white margin.

As I walked around the nursery this summer I noticed that there were very few hostas with white margins. Yes, I had 'Victory' and some nice plants of the highly twisted 'Bachelor Party', extreme forms of hostas, and those mentioned above but really very little else. Customer taste certainly had had an effect on my purchasing habits. I decided however to give these underappreciated hostas one more chance and brought five classic white-margined hostas into the nursery for next year. They are 'Robert Frost', 'American Halo' (similar to 'Northern Halo'), 'Earth Angel', 'Sagae' and 'First Frost'. Yes, I am hedging my bets by including the last three which will have yellow margins for at least the first half of the selling season but at least my heart is in the right place. We'll see how they sell, the price will be right!

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 'Twist Tie'



Hosta 'Ambrosia' PPAF



Hosta 'Icy Halo'



Hosta '1st and Ten'



Hosta 'Honey Bear'



Hosta 'Curly Fries'



Hosta 'First Blush' PPAF



Hosta 'Lemon Zinger'



Hosta 'Tidewater'



Hosta 'Urchin'



Hosta 'World Cup'

Bob's Hybridizer Tips

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

Step 1 Goals

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Step 2 Pollination

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

Try crossing both ways. For whatever

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

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

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

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

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

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

Step 3 Seeds

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

Dry the pods in a paper envelope for at

least a week.

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

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

Sow seeds in moist seedling mix and lightly cover.

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

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

Step 4 Growing Seedlings

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

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

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

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SPRING 2017

Complete Retail Hosta Listing

♥ indicates our introductions

“New and exciting!!!”

♥ **‘First Blush’**^{PPAF} (Solberg 2015) - (48/49 seedling X ‘Beet Salad’) - Medium, (12” X 24”) ‘First Blush’ not only has green leaves with red petioles that extend into the leaf blade but also a thin red margin around the leaf, similar but much more dramatic than its parent ‘Beet Salad’. However, the most exciting thing about ‘First Blush’ is that in spring the leaf between the veins will start to “blush” red from the tip of the leaf down toward the base. The leaves remain red here until temperatures surpass 92 degrees, usually into June. The color should persist longer in Northern gardens. Our first red-leafed hosta. We do plan to patent this hosta. **\$40**

♥ **‘Love of My Life’** (Solberg 2017) - (‘Sun Shower’ X ‘Designer Genes’ sport) - Medium, (14” X 30”) Yes, I love this very special hosta. It is a cross of my ‘Sun Shower’ and ‘Designer Genes’ that sported right away from an all yellow plant to one with a green edge. Having *H. longipes* and *H. sieboldiana* genes, in many ways it is like ‘June’ but more robust. In addition, it also has red petioles and pinkish purple scapes. It is very sexy in the spring! **May Delivery \$75**

♥ **‘Fairy Dust’** (Solberg 2017) - (‘Corkscrew’ X ‘Green Eyes’ F2) - Mini, (5” X 8”) I am very excited about my intensely yellow little mini ‘Fairy Dust’, a second generation seedling from ‘Corkscrew’ and ‘Green Eyes’. Its narrow upright leaves sparkle brightly all summer and it has good substance, too. This one makes sparks fly! **\$50**

♥ **‘Lemon Zinger’** (Solberg 2017) - (‘Dragon Tails’ sport) - Mini, (7” X 16”) ‘Lemon Zinger’ is my green-margined sport of the increasingly popular ‘Dragon Tails’. Its wavy bright yellow leaves are outlined in dark green. It is a vigorous little mini, perfect in a pot. It just might be your cup of tea. **\$30**

♥ **‘Twist Tie’** (Solberg 2017) - (‘Tongue Twister’ X [‘Iwa’ X ‘Blue Blush’]) - Small, (10” X 18”) ‘Twist Tie’ is a small blue-green hosta with very upright twisted leaves. It is from ‘Tongue Twister’ and like it it has very good substance and is one of the last hostas to go to sleep. Twisted hostas are my new passion, wait to you see what comes next. **May Delivery \$35**

♥ **‘Honey Bear’** (Solberg 2017) - (‘Honey Pie’ sport) - Large, (20” X 42”) The rich green and yellow combination of color of this fragrant-flowered sport of my hosta ‘Honey Pie’ is an eye stopper in the garden. At maturity the leaves become rounded and somewhat puckered with a dark green leaf center and a honey-colored margin. Like its parent it is sun tolerant and grows rapidly. **\$35**

♥ **‘Mouse Madness’** (Zilis, Solberg 2017) - (‘Solar Mouse’ sport) - Mini, (5” X 12”) Maybe the best of the mice so far, this white-edged sport of the all-white and almost impossible to grow ‘Solar Mouse’ is very

vigorous. ‘Mouse Madness’ emerges with very bright white margins in the spring that do not melt but stay attractive well into late summer. A must for your collection of mice. **Limited \$40**

♥ **‘Flamenco Mouse’** (C. Wilson, Hallson Gardens 2012) - (‘Blue Mouse Ears’ sport) - Mini, (4” X 8”) Here is another ‘Blue Mouse Ears’ sport from Hallson Gardens. It develops ruffled leaf margins with the traditional blue-green rounded leaves as it matures. It grows well in a container or in the garden. **Limited \$20**

♥ **‘1st and Ten’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - (‘Brutus’ X BEV3-MOM seedling) - Very Large, (32” X 50”) This is a big hosta! It is almost 3 feet tall with very large shovel-like blue-green leaves with good substance. Part of Doug Beilstein’s gridiron series, it is a seedling from his very popular ‘Brutus’. I love its dramatic leaf veins and upright habit. **\$35**

♥ **‘Razzmatazz’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - (‘Color Fantasy’ X ‘Potomac Pride’) - Medium, (17” X 36”) We do not think of hosta leaf engineering very often, but it is the structural design of this creamy white-margined hosta that grabs your attention. It has a dozen or so deeply impressed veins that not only give an overbuilt appearance but also help the leaf margin to ruffle. On any breeze the ruffles will cause the leaf to dance, form compelling function. Give it a try. **\$25**

♥ **‘Stan the Man’** (B. Kuk) - Medium, (17” X 34”) This beautiful medium to large hosta from the late Bob Kuk has an unusual wide two-tone margin, yellow on the edge and white next to the blue-green center. It has good vigor for having *H. sieboldiana* heritage. Named for his father. **Special \$25**

Medium to Large Hostas:

♥ **‘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. **\$30**

♥ **‘Beet Salad’** (Solberg 2009) - (*H. clausa* normalis F2 seedling X (*H. ‘Ogon Tsushima’* X *H. ‘yingeri’* F2 seedling)) - Medium, (12” X 24”) ‘Beet Salad’ is back and boy am I glad. This has turned into a pretty cool hosta, at least according to the feedback I get from my customers. I don’t know if it is its fast growth rate, the bright red petioles, or the masses of flowers but people just love it. It has grown into a fairly large hosta just because of the number of divisions a clump can make. **Special \$25**

♥ **‘Blue Perfection’** (Solberg 2015) - (Sport of ‘Ambrosia’^{PPAF}) - Large, (24” X 54”) This is the fast growing, fragrant-flowered blue, yes blue hosta, for which we have all been waiting. It has very waxy blue leaves that are enhanced when grown in half a day of cool sun. The light lavender flowers that arrive in late July are very fragrant, unlike other “fragrant blue” hostas. You have got to try this one. **\$25**

♥ **‘Candy Kisses’** (Solberg, G. Meyer, Shades of Green Hosta Soc. 2013) - (‘Candy Dish’ X [*H. pycnophylla* X ‘Harvest Dandy’] ‘Raspberry Sorbet’) - Medium, (12” X 24”) This highly ruffled green pointed-leafed hosta has white leaf backs and is waxy above in the spring and then very shiny in summer. It has some purple on the petioles as does its sibling, ‘Plum Nutty’. This favorite of mine makes a great container hosta. **\$25**

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

♥ **‘Fragrant Blue Ribbons’** (S. Beikman 2007) - (‘Fragrant Blue’ sport) - Small to medium, (12” X 25”) This sport of the very waxy blue ‘Fragrant Blue’ emerges with a bright creamy white margin that may streak toward the leaf center. It is a fast grower and very showy in early spring. I believe it is under appreciated. **\$15**

♥ **‘Her Eyes Were Blue’** (D. Dean, M. Schwartzbauer 2008) - (‘Frosted Dimples’ X ‘Sea Frolic’) - Medium, (12” X 30”) Named by Mary Schwartzbauer for her mother this Don Dean seedling was selected for its long lasting very blue color. It grows into a medium mound with leaves that are both ruffled and puckered, an unusual combination. Fertile and early flowering, you should try this in your hybridizing program. **\$20**

♥ **‘Honey Pie’** (Solberg 2012) - (‘September Sun’ X *H. plantaginea*) - Large, (18” X 40”) This may have been my favorite hosta this summer. Despite all the heat, boy did it grow. The honey colored leaves pucker with age and fragrant flowers follow in late summer. It is a large hosta, a cross of ‘September Sun’ and *H. plantaginea*, having the best characteristics of both parents. Give this one a little extra sun also. **\$20**

♥ **‘Hovercraft’** (D. & M. Beilstein 2016) - (*H. laevigata* X op. seedling) - Medium, (16” X 30”) I really like this hosta even as a little liner. I like the roundness of the leaves and the nice blue color. It too is a large classic form hosta but with a little more open look as the leaves seem to float over their petioles. A fine blue from Doug Beilstein. **Special \$25**

♥ **‘Icy Halo’** (C. Tomashek 20) - (‘Parhelion’ sport) - Huge. (After a small glitch in production this monster is back also. This new sport of ‘Parhelion’ has rich green leaves and an almost pure white margin. Save a large space for this dramatic hosta that is the pride and joy of Cindy Tomashek in Minnesota. **Special \$25**

♥ **‘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

Our New Hostas for 2017

‘First Blush’^{PPAF}

‘Love of My Life’

‘Fairy Dust’

‘Lemon Zinger’

‘Twist Tie’

‘Honey Bear’

‘Mouse Madness’

‘Flamenco Mouse’

‘1st and Ten’

‘Razzmatazz’

‘Stan the Man’

a ceramic container. Beautiful purple scapes produce seed pods easily. Great for hybridizing. It is love at first sight. **\$25**

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

♥ **‘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**

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BOB'S HYBRIDIZER TIPS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

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

Step 5 Selection

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Step 6 Naming

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

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

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

Green hostas need the best names.

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

Short names fit better on labels.

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

Step 7 Propagation

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

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

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

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

Step 8 Marketing

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

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

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

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

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

Step 9 Hybridizing is Fun!

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

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

SPRING 2016 COMPLETE RETAIL HOSTA LISTINGS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

'Lime Ripple' (Ed Schultz 2011) - (Seedling of unknown parentage) - Large, (22" X 38" or larger) This very new hosta from Ed Schultz is a wonderful lime gold color, brighter in the sun, with large heart-shaped leaves that are nicely rippled, hence the name, and somewhat puckered. It is a sturdy plant that will make a strong statement in morning sun. It is an early bloomer and good breeder. **\$20**

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

'Megan's Angel' (D. & M. Beilstein 2009) - (Sport of streaked 'Blue Angel') - Huge, (22" X 54" or larger) This one of Doug Beilstein's is a sport of the classic 'Blue Angel', named for his daughter. The huge blue leaves emerge with this wide, soft yellow border that will become white by late summer. It grows well and has the same wonderful near white flower display as its parent. It will grow large enough to fill a whiskey barrel. **\$25**

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

♥ 'Pea Pod' (Solberg 2013) - (Sport of 'Sugar Snap') - Large, (22" X 40") This all green form from the 'Sweet Sunshine' line has dark green leaves that are cupped and puckered and surprise, surprise, near white fragrant flowers in July. It is sun tolerant and is the perfect replacement for a 'Tokudama' in southern gardens. **\$20**

♥ 'Peach Salsa' (Solberg 2013) - (*H. clausa normalis* F2 seedling X 'Strawberry Banana Smoothie') - Medium, (12" X 20") This bright yellow hosta has puckered leaves that are almost translucent, it glows! It is also a showoff with its bright red, not purple, petioles and scapes. Don't cut the flowers off this one. A sibling of my 'Smiley Face' and 'Mango Salsa', this one is a dappled shade plant that will brighten up any garden path. **\$20**

'Pebble Creek' (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ('Lime Piecrust' X 'Blue Splendor') - Large, (26" X 42") Doug Beilstein loves yellow classic hostas, the cupping but mostly he loves the puckering. This large hosta combines both. It will take some strong light in Ohio and becomes brighter yellow as the summer progresses. Great as a background for smaller hostas. **Special \$25**

'Permafrost' (M. Zilis 2010) - ('First Frost' sport) - Medium, (14" X 30") This is a beautiful hosta from a top 10 parent. Its wide yellow margin borders a rich blue leaf center that will demand your attention from across the garden. It is a very sturdy hosta and perfect

for the big splash of color in the shade. **\$20**

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

♥ 'Plum Nutty' (Solberg 2011) - ('Candy Dish' X [*H. pycnophylla* X 'Harvest Dandy') X 'Raspberry Sorbet']) - Medium, (16" X 30") I may be crazy for introducing this hosta with its shiny, (no wax), long-pointed leaves that are highly rippled but I really like it. It does have some purple on the petioles but is reluctant to set seed, (but does), for me since it flowers on nicely arching scapes in July here. You may have better luck. **\$20**

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

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

'Roberta' (D. Chopko, B. Kuk 2008) - ('Golden Delight' sport) - Medium, (18" X 28") Named for Dave's wife and hosta superstar, Roberta Chopko this medium-sized, round-leafed hosta has the classic colors of 'Frances Williams', a rich golden margin and a blue leaf center. Great for smaller gardens. **\$20**

'Rough Knight' (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ('King of Spades' op) open pollinated) - Small-Medium, (10" X 36") - Doug Beilstein has a special place in his hosta heart for cupped hostas, so do I. This small blue-green beauty has very cupped leaves with perfect little rows of puckers. All the leaves appear to be emerging from a single point like a bouquet of foliage, to decorate the garden. Great in a pot, too. **\$20**

'Tidewater' (M. Zilis 2003) - (*H. kikutii leucanota* X 'Elegans') - Large, (18" X 40") This is a cool hosta! It is a cross between a white backed *H. kikutii* and 'Elegans' by Mark Zilis. It is large and intensely blue but has long narrow leaves with lots of veins. It has lots of white wax and lots of character. You must have this one. **\$25**

'Victory' (M. Zilis, Solberg 2003) - (Sport of 'Elatior') - Huge, (36" X 84") This is an awesome hosta, one of the best ever. Yes, this wide white-margined sport of 'Elatior' requires a substantial piece of garden real estate but its stately upright habit deserves a prominent spot. Don't have room? It makes a great

pot plant also. Hosta of the Year for 2015. **\$15**

'World Cup' (D. Beilstein & M. Zilis, M. Zilis 2006) - ('Komodo Dragon' X 'Super Bowl') - Large, (20" X 44") This hosta is destined to find its way into the Top 25. It is also the one that got away. Selected from Doug Beilstein's seedlings by Mark Zilis' keen eye, this very tall and very upright bright yellow hosta is a showstopper where ever you see it. Grows well in deep shade or cool sun. **\$20**

Miniature and Small Hostas:

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

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

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

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

'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"**

♥ '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**

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



Hosta 'Evening Blush' and its flower

♥ '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 a photo. I will add that the agave-looking leaves are stiff as a board and you can see that our award winning 'Curly Fries' is the most unique hosta to be intro-

Is It Time To Repot?

Many of us are growing more and more of our specimen hostas in containers. Hostas in pots solve many of the environmental problems that annoy our precious plants. Tree root competition can be eliminated, slug damage reduced, even deer and voles can be deterred. Plus, hostas love growing in pots, they make great container plants.

Potting hostas is really very easy. The plants we usually purchase are one or two division plants that slide easily into a pot. Your potting soil usually comes in a bag now, and even if you tweak it a little to fit your watering schedule, more bark or more peat, it is pretty much readymade. Add a little slow release fertilizer and water and you are done. You have a potted hosta that will grow wonderfully for years.

"How many years?" you begin to wonder. Now that you have maybe fifty pots of hostas scattered around the garden, on the back deck and decorating the front walk, the dread of having to repot them every year or two has started to creep into the back of your gardener's mind. Potting is fun, repotting is not, because you must "unpot" before you repot. Small pots are one thing but those large planters are no fun at all. So we put it off with just a little twinge of guilt, until our hostas start to suffer.

The right time to repot is determined by two factors, simply enough, the hosta and the potting soil. Large hostas will "outgrow" small pots. They will become root bound. In round pots the roots circle the container lap after lap until they form a thick mass with just a little oasis of soil left in the middle of the pot. In square pots the roots go down and then back up to the top of the pot, filling the entire pot with roots. Either way, a pot of roots does not hold water as well as a pot of soil and eventually the hosta roots will desiccate, rot, and die. Root bound hostas need fresh soil and a larger pot.

If the pot size is well matched to the mature size of the

hosta, a large hosta in a large pot, there still is a need to repot since the potting soil itself breaks down. Most potting mixes are high in organic matter, peat moss and pine bark. Over time this organic matter degrades into smaller particles and even disappears all together. You know the symptoms, when you initially potted the hosta the pot was full of soil but now one or two inches of the inside of the pot are visible. The soil has compacted with some of the finer particles even washing through the holes and out the bottom of the pot.

As potting soil ages, it changes physically and chemically. Smaller particle size means less water holding capacity. It is harder to get the soil wet. Frequently the water runs down the side of the pot and out the holes but does not wet the soil thoroughly. Chemically, the media may become more acid, having a pH so low that it is difficult for your hosta to absorb the nutrients it needs. Salts from fertilizer residue may also build up in the soil harming your hosta. Also, the ratio of peat, bark and other inorganic components like perlite begin to change, with the percentage of the latter becoming larger and larger. Potting media does not last forever.

So repotting is a necessity, eventually. Hostas in small pots need to be stepped up ideally every other year until the pot size matches the mature size of the hosta. Little hostas like little pots, large ones like large pots. Once the pot size is just right, repotting may include dividing the hosta in half and making two pots from one or just removing some of the oldest, longest roots from the clump and putting it back in the same pot. The time to repot mature hostas that have found their perfect sized homes may be after several years, five or even more, especially if some lime is added in the third year to raise the pH. (I have some hostas that have been in pots much longer than that I am afraid to confess. They are not at their prime but still look pretty good if I fertilize them.)

Vary your potting mix. Pot immature hostas in a potting

mix that will hold up well for two years. A bagged mix will be perfectly fine for this usually. Once your hostas become mature, try adding up to one third garden soil, (real dirt), to your bark soilless mix and this will increase the time interval between repotting. You may add some small gravel also to create some permanent air spaces in the media. Beware, these pots will be heavy whether wet or dry and may require a small dolly to move to the garage for winter.

I grow all my hostas in containers in the nursery but I ship most all of them without the pot. I am a professional "unpotter". (That is the technical term, of course.) In fact, we unpot so many hostas for shipping that I have to hire an additional two or three "unpotters" every spring. There are special techniques, tricks of the trade, for this skilled position at our nursery and I will now pass along a few of our trade secrets to you.

Let's start with a stubborn root bound hosta in an undersized round pot. Remove the plant from the pot, sometimes easier said than done. I always turn the pot upside down and shake the plant down out of the pot. If it does not want to come out, it is really pot bound, you can stand on the pot with one foot and flatten the sides of the pot to loosen it. If that fails, cut the pot with tin snips. Once removed, you will find a mass of roots like spaghetti wrapped tightly around the base of the plant. Try to unwrap these roots. The pot holes should have air pruned some finger holes in the root mass to help get things started. Pull hard, you can afford to break a few roots. Repeat. Repeat again.

Once you have the spaghetti roots draining down from the bottom of the plant, place one hand on each side of the root mass and try to split it in half, left hand to the left and right hand to the right. Then try to quarter the roots. By now the roots should begin to come apart and you can finish it off.

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SPRING 2016 COMPLETE RETAIL HOSTA LISTINGS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9



Hosta 'Curly Fries'

duced 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

'Dave' (B. Kuk 2011) - ('Golden Delight' sport) - Small, (12" X 18") Named for hosta collector extraordinaire Dave Chopko, this hosta has bright yellow leaves bordered in chartreuse. It has good substance, strong veination, and makes a tight flashy mound in morning sun. Different. \$25

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

'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

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

'Ladybug' (D. & J. Ward 1996) - ('Vanilla Cream' seedling) - Mini-Small, (10" X 22") I like minis that grow and look a little different. This hosta is both. It is an interesting yellow seedling from 'Vanilla Cream' and Dick Ward that has ruffled leaves and a rapid growth rate. It is a large mini but still a perfect fit with the rest of your little ones. \$15

'Lemon Love Note' (D. & M. Beilstein 2016) - ('Quill' X op. seedling) - Mini-Small, (10" X 20") This little hosta is better than it looks in the photo. It is a wavy, highly ruffled mini that grows rapidly into a neat bright yellow mound. A seedling of Doug Beilstein's, it has nice lavender flowers, too. And I just love the name. \$15

'Lemontini' (M. Zilis 2009) - (Sport of 'Blue Dimples' X 'Shining Tot') - Mini, (7" X 12") This is one of the "tini" series from Q & Z Nursery. I think 'Apple-tini' is probably the best of the group but this little bright yellow hosta comes in a close second. It grows well and its bright color will delight you in early spring. I have been impressed with it even as a liner. \$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. \$25

'Lime Zest' (M. Zilis 2009) - ('Shining Tot' X unknown) - (6" X 14") This little hosta was a surprise last summer. It held its dark green color all summer and even decided to bloom in August despite the horrible weather. It is fast growing and an excellent mini to add to your collection. Everybody needs a little green. \$15

'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

'Mighty Mouse' (Walters Gardens 2006) - ('Blue Mouse Ears' sport) - Mini, (5" X 12") Yes, another mouse. This one has a nice yellow border that becomes white in summer. It grows well and holds up through the summer heat. \$15

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

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

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

'Urchin' (D. & M. Beilstein 2013) - ('Candy Dish' X (H. pycnophylla X 'Harvest Dandy') X 'Raspberry Sorbet') X 'Atom Smasher' op.) - Mini, (8" X 13") This unique little hosta has leaves with lots of ruffles that appear to have points at their ends. The green leaves stick up from the clump like spines, urchin spines. The scapes and seed pods are dark purple. Another winner from Doug Beilstein. \$20

'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

Oldies but Goodies, you know these classics ... so short descriptions, smaller prices. Mix and match: \$15 or "Two for \$25"

'American Halo' Large. Creamy wide-margined sport of 'Elegans.'

'Captain Kirk' Large. Wide green-margined tetraploid sport of 'Gold Standard.'

'Earth Angel' Huge. Yellow-margined sport of 'Blue Angel.'

'First Frost' Medium. Yellow-margined sport of 'Halcyon.'

'Frosty Morn' Medium. Thick yellow leaves with abundant white wax.

'Parhelion' Huge. White-margined sport of 'Sum and Substance.'

'Robert Frost' Large. Blue green leaves with a creamy white margin.

'Sage' Huge. Large pointed blue leaves with a bright yellow margin.

'Sugar and Spice' Medium. Bright white-margined sport of 'Invincible.'

'Victory' Huge. White-margined sport of 'Elatior.'

'Yesterday's Memories' Large. Dark green-margined sport of 'Squash Casserole.'

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The local gossip 2017



Hosta 'Love of My Life'

Shady Study

I recently surfed across a scientific article on hostas and shade. It was entitled "Photosynthetic responses of four *Hosta* cultivars to shade treatments". (PHYTOSYNTHETICA 42 (2): 213-218, 2004) I was thrilled to see that it was very much like the "old school" science that I knew in graduate school, which just means it was simple enough for me to read it easily and understand the graphs and statistics.

Basically, the photosynthetic rates four hostas, 'Antioch', 'Aphrodite', 'Elegans' and 'Gold Edger' were measured under various amount of shade, 5%, 30% and 50%. As we would expect 'Antioch' and 'Gold Edger' were most productive at 30% shade, more sun, and 'Elegans' performed best at 50% shade as it is a shade lover.

Interestingly, 'Aphrodite', the double flowered form of the species *H. plantaginea*, also performed best at 50% shade and even showed a drop in photosynthetic rate during the mid-day hours under 30% shade. Thus this study suggests that 'Aphrodite' really prefers shade. Maybe it is time to question our hosta axiom that all fragrant-flowered hostas demand sun. It seems that we should at least give 'Aphrodite' some mid-day shade along with that extra water we always recommend. Look for the article in an upcoming issue of *The Hosta Journal*.

Something to think about, and maybe discuss among yourselves.

What, no exclusive club plant?

Life happens. Good ideas become routine and then taken for granted. What's the old saying, "You never know what you have until it's gone"? Unfortunately, there is no exclusive club hosta this year. This article is actually filling

the space in the "Gossip" where it would be described. There is no single reason for this, but several factors that have all come together at the same moment in time.

First, club orders are still a very important part of our business and always will be, but demand for our exclusive hosta has been down. The concept of our club hosta has always been to give hosta clubs a plant that they could not get elsewhere. This would encourage members to join their club and make Hostadom in general more prosperous.

At the same time new hostas have become more and more scarce especially exclusive ones as the number of hosta tissue culture labs has shrunk dramatically. Almost every hosta I sell now I must put into the lab myself under contract. There is no more "buying off the shelf" at Q & Z and Shady Oaks. So production got behind and my need for new exclusive hostas has skyrocketed beyond my own ability to meet it.

Further, my new hosta liner business is soaring as I try to fill a portion of the gap left in the market. That means fewer liners make it into our bare root production and then there are fewer that I can offer to clubs. For this year our club list and bare root wholesale list will be the same. We have been heading that way the past couple of years anyway and unfortunately now we are there.

Will the exclusive club hosta return, headlining our club list? You betcha! Hopefully, I will have something special for the hosta clubs again next year because I believe in supporting them in every way I can. So thanks for your understanding, better days are coming.

Hybridizers wanted!

As you just read, "my need for new exclusive hostas has skyrocketed beyond my own ability to meet it." Yes, hybridizers, but more so your best hostas are wanted to add to our growing list of great new hostas. And yes, we will pay you for them.

In the past, Green Hill Farm has introduced hostas for Mary Chastain, Jim Wilkins and believe it or not introduced 'Patriot' to the retail market for Mobjack Nursery. We currently handle plants for Doug Beilstein and Don Dean as well a few other hybridizers that we have helped along the way.

Our mission is to market your hosta first to hosta collectors and home gardeners through our retail division of which the "Gossip" and our website are our primary sales tools. Then we will wholesale your hosta to specialty hosta growers and garden centers around the world so that your hosta gets maximum exposure. Hopefully it will become a household name and maybe even a top 25 plant or even Hosta of the Year.

So send me a photo of your favorite seedlings and I will be glad to discuss where they might fit into our current

hosta line. I will probably also want to see the plant in person, so I may just come to visit while I am on the road this summer. In any case, let's see if we can't help each other to fill Hostadom with some great new hostas.

"Gossip Jr." Price Increase

Well it finally has happened. After 20 years, rising postal rates have finally forced me to increase the cost of my "Gossip Jr.". It is now **\$10 for one year and \$25 for three years**. It is still a bargain and I am in no way getting rich off of it.

Here is what you get for your subscription: You get the "Green Hill Gossip" this fine color newspaper mailed to you in March and an eight page, usually but not always, black and white newsletter in August and November. The latter are filled with "Thoughts off the top of my head" and other interesting articles inspired by my travels through Hostadom.

Don't get the "Gossip Jr." now but like to read, maybe again and again, what you see here? Then, you can subscribe now on our Order Form at our website, www.Hosta-Hosta.com or just hand me a check and your address when our paths cross this summer. You can also always mail a check to the nursery of course, Green Hill Farm, PO Box 773, Franklinton, NC 27525.

Saturday, August 12th Lucky \$13 Sale

I'm not desperate, but I may have lost my mind. (Maybe you can help me find it.) I have always wanted to do this and last summer I actually did for our local customers. I love the idea of all my hostas being the same low price for just one day of the year. Yes, all the hostas that are ready to sell in the nursery, not the newly potted little babies, but all the hostas even the \$50 dollar ones are just one low price, \$13.00 each.

Here are the rules:

All hostas with a name sign in the block are \$13.00 each. No limit!

This price is for one day only, Saturday, August 12, 2017, 9-5:00 at the nursery only, rain or shine.

We will supply labels and markers but you make your own labels.

We will bag your hostas for you.

Cash, check, and Visa, MasterCard, and Discover accepted.

You do not have to be present to participate, just send a friend to the nursery on August 12th with your want list. Make sure they are willing to deliver because we cannot ship hostas bought at this sale.

So come early and stay late, I will have some drinks and goodies for you and I guarantee you a crazy fun time!!! A party just may break out.

Is It Time To Repot?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

What if this doesn't work and the roots are just too tight? Put the whole thing in a bucket of water and soften them up. You can usually get them apart after a good soaking. If this fails then get a sharp knife, place the hosta on its side and saw off the bottom one inch of the root ball. This should get rid of all tangle at the base and open up the middle of the plant to your fingers. Then try the bucket of water.

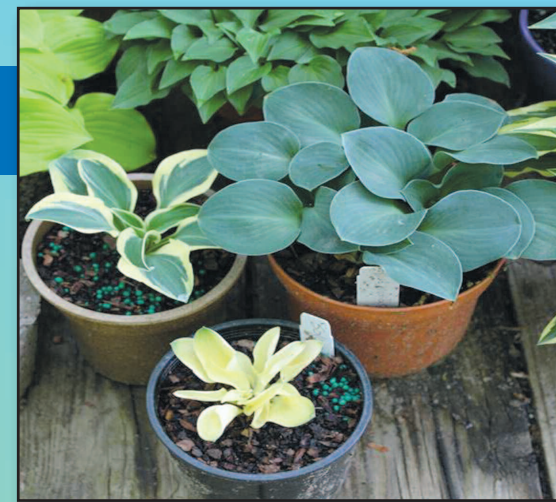
Square pots are a little easier, usually. The roots go down then up, so pull them down from the top and then up from the bottom. They will tend to thicken in the corners so insert your finger behind the wad of roots and pull away from the center. If the entire pot is full of roots, try the water. I also use the side of a knife blade to tease out some of the corner roots. Insert the knife and then pull out with the flat part of it not the blade, carefully.

We do not put fertilizer all around our small pots but just put a pile in one corner. The root growth will then be uneven, heavier under the fertilizer, so there is always an easy side of the root mass to unravel first. If you know that you will be stepping up that hosta in a year or two then just pile the fertilizer in one corner. If it is a mature pot, then a little all-around is better. Mature hostas will not get so insanely root bound.

Is it okay to prune the roots so that they go back into the pot? Yes, but remember hosta roots just grow at their tips. It is better to prune just the longest and oldest roots and leave the shorter ones uncut. By the way, hostas make their new roots above, closer to the sky, last year's roots. The oldest roots are at the base of the crown and are probably not as active as the new white, lengthening ones.

Sometime we wait too long to repot. We wait until our hosta is beginning to shrink. When we finally take our poor hosta out of the pot we see that part of that overgrown root mass has rotted. This is not all bad; it does make it easier to untangle the remaining roots. It is important to remove all the rotten roots and any soft parts of the crown. Usually it is the oldest part of the crown, the bottom, which has rotted and can be removed with a sharp knife, not the one with which you have been digging in the dirt. Make sure you remove any of the soft tissue as well as any brown tissue that will become rotten after you repot. Rinse the surgical area with a 10% bleach solution, 1 part bleach and 9 parts water and then rinse with water.

When is the best time to repot? Whenever the urge hits you! You can repot hostas almost anytime but I like August the best, of course unless it is 100 degrees. This gives them time to settle in before the first frost. (That might be a good name for a hosta, you think, 'First Frost'?) In spring after the first leaves harden off is also a good time, especially if you are not divid-



Hosta 'Mouse Madness'

ing. Hostas are actively making new roots at this time and will fill the pot quickly. At that time you will see those fresh little white roots sprouting out of the crown. It is really exciting.

Finally, think about repotting while you are potting. Will you be putting this hosta in a larger pot in a year or is this its final resting place? Choose your potting mix and fertilizing strategy accordingly. Try putting more than one hosta in a container but remember minis have different soil and pot size requirements than giant hostas. Then, control your urge to buy more and more expensive pots. Remember, you need to save some money for hostas.