

# Hosta Happenings

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois Hosta Society

ISSUE 116

MARCH 2021

## 2020/2021 CALENDAR AT A GLANCE

- **Mar 2021 Spring Pot Luck, cancelled**
- **April 11, Spring Symposium Webinar via Zoom**
- **May 2021, Hosta Leaf Display & Plant Sale, Chicago Botanic Garden, cancelled**
- **June 26, Wisconsin Garden Caravan, Cedarburg, WI & other locs**
- **July 15-17, 2021 AHS Virtual Convention, Kalamazoo, MI**
- **July 25, Hosta Garden Walk, Elgin**
- **Aug 13-15, Online Hosta Auction**
- **Sept 2021, Potluck & Annual Mtg, TBD**
- **Oct 2021, Fall Symposium, TBD**
- **Dec 2021, Holiday Party, TBD**
- **July 14-16, 2022 MRHS Convention, Hostas Chicago Style, hosted by NIHS, Lisle Postponed to 2022**  
**Save the Date!**



## President's Letter

Welcome back Spring!! The snow is "almost" gone from our yard, so it's time to get our thoughts organized for our yards and gardens for 2021. It's good that we have our gardens to keep our minds off of much of what the world has been experiencing these past 12 months. It would appear that we are moving in the right direction to return to some sort of normalcy. Let's keep our fingers crossed.

As you can see in our Calendar at a Glance, we have already had to cancel a couple of events. There was no March Spring Potluck this year and we will replace our "in person" Spring Symposium with an online virtual event using Zoom. Please read Janet Simpson's article to get more details on this event. Using Zoom is not that difficult and we have included instructions on how to participate in Janet's article.

The next activity is our Annual Sponsor Plant Sale. What a great program and I get to review potential plants that we can offer to you each year. I promised myself this was going to be the year I won't buy any hostas. Do you know how difficult that is, of course you do. How can you possibly look through all of the potential hostas being offered and not start thinking about how they would look in your garden. It is as much a pleasure as

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## President's Letter *continued*

it is a curse to my bank account. Hi, my name is Mike and I am a Hostaholic. My last hosta purchase was 7 days ago (as I write this).

Since we will not have an in-person Spring Symposium, we will again identify a couple of locations where you will be able to pick up your plants. New this year is the ability to purchase our Sponsor Plants online from our website, [www.northernillinoishostasociety.org](http://www.northernillinoishostasociety.org). Please read my article below about the 5 great cultivars the Board is offering this year and how you can purchase them.

Zoe Ingersoll is working feverishly to get our garden walks booked this year. We look forward to the new gardens she is reviewing. This year the annual bus tour will look different. Mark Rekoske is organizing a Garden Caravan to Wisconsin. Given the pandemic and the current vaccination process Mark believed it would be better to have individuals drive rather than have everyone load onto a bus. See Mark's article detailing our trip this summer.

It is that time of year again to get back into the AHS National Display Garden at Cantigny Park. If you haven't seen our garden, it is a real gem. We have a dedicated group of NIHS members that maintain the garden each year. Please consider volunteering this year. See Barbara King's article to gain more information. Hope to see you out there this year.

As you may have already seen, the AHS Convention in Kalamazoo, MI has gone virtual this summer from July 15 – 17. Ron Asselborn has included the Press Release for the AHS 2021 Virtual Convention. We also had to postpone, a second time, the Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention in Lisle that NIHS is hosting. Please read Barbara King's article updating us on the 2022 MRHS convention.

Our incredibly successful 2020 Online Auction will once again be online in 2021. Ron and Judi Asselborn and their team did a magnificent job in setting up and executing last year's auction. Details will follow in a future newsletter.

I always ask people to visit our website as it has a great deal of pertinent information. Recently we had to upgrade to a new Weebly platform as the platform we were using was no longer supported by Weebly. Stevie Meginness, our Webmaster, performed the upgrade and has added even more information than was there previously. One of the changes with this upgrade was the Calendar presentation. Previously this was a "list/table view" of our events. With the new version you now see a typical full month calendar presentation that you would click on an event to see the details. Stevie has included instructions on this page on how to convert this to a list view for easier reading of the entire year's events. We also have a Facebook page which has become very popular recently. We have more than doubled our viewers/participants over the last number of months to 500+. Since we only have approximately 200 memberships we are being noticed by people throughout the state and country. If you are on Facebook, take a look at our page. It is fun and an informative place to learn.



The Northern Illinois Hosta Society was formed in 1992. A few years back the Board voted to honor people who have been members for 25 years or more. In 2021 we have a new group to be inducted into this "exclusive group"... Jami Flaws, Sandra Lee Klausman, Ed & Irene Marquardt, Floyd & Betsy Rogers and Beverly Romag. Please join me in congratulating this group of Hosta Lovers. Your NIHS Board has worked hard to ensure

*Continued next page*

## President's Letter *continued*

that we have a menu of pertinent activities for you to participate in. This past year has been difficult but your Board members have stepped up and done a fantastic job. They are always looking for new opportunities to add to our event list. Currently there is a review going on to see if we might be able to add a Photo Contest to our activities this summer. We will keep you posted as this develops.

If you would like to be more involved with NIHS, we have volunteer opportunities that might interest you. A good place to start is on our website. Under our "ABOUT US" tab click on Volunteers. We list a "few" possibilities for you to consider.

Looking for some great hostas this summer? Consider contacting one or more of our Member Vendors. Again, go to our website, go to the ABOUT US tab and click on Member Vendors. There you will find our list of vendors with either a link to their website, Facebook Page or we show their phone number.

I am really looking forward to getting back out in the yard, as I assume you are also. Be Well and Be Safe.

Hosta-la-Vista,

Mike Kraus

# 2021 Special Events

Open House & Hosta Walk on June 11-12-13

Hosta Expert Bob Solberg on Sunday, July 18 (*reservations required*)



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## Join Us for our Spring Symposium Sunday April 11

By Janet Simpson

**P**lease join us for our Spring Symposium on **Sunday April 11 at 1:00pm**. Along with the many changes we have had to make this past year, our Spring Symposium will be virtual. Our presentation will be **“Why Organic Matter Matters”** given by Extension Educator Richard Hentschel. The basic theory in organic gardening is that “Nature Knows Best”. When the organic gardener enriches the soil, it is built from the bottom up. Harmful chemicals put your family and plants at risk. By working with nature, organic gardening nurtures the soil and everything that grows in it by using techniques and systems found in nature. Your soil is a wondrous living microcosm needing to be cultivated with care. Using organic methods helps to live a cleaner, healthier existence in a more earth-friendly way.

Richard has worked for over twenty years at the U of I Extension Office educating the public on timely topics. He received his Masters in Plant Pathology and Plant Physiology from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana. He is very knowledgeable on many topics and a much sought speaker.

This presentation will be hosted on computer software called Zoom. If you have never used Zoom here are some tips and tricks.

First, you need to download Zoom (it is free and secure), just click the link provided in the email you received to start the meeting anytime between now and 10 minutes before the meeting, allow your computer to download the Zoom application. If you are planning to use your smart phone, download the Zoom App.

When you come into the meeting Sunday April 11<sup>th</sup> by 1:00 make sure you are using the correct camera (for you to be seen by your hosta friends) and the correct speakers and mic (although not needed for this meeting). Simply wiggle your mouse and look in the bottom left corner of your zoom screen. The camera icon you can click on to turn your camera off if you don't want people to see you. You should be muted when you come into the meeting, please stay muted for the duration of the meeting. If you are not muted, simply click on the microphone button in the bottom left corner of your screen to mute. If you are having problems with your camera or speakers - simply click the little downward triangle next to either of them and make sure you have selected the right one for your device.

We will be taking questions at the end of the presentation. How do I ask a question? If there is not a bar of commands at the bottom of your screen, simply wiggle your mouse in the middle of your screen to get it to appear. Click on the Chat Button probably in the bottom middle of your screen. A chat box should appear on the bottom right of your screen. Type your question into the chat box. Questions will be presented to Richard as time is available.

**Directions for attending:** You will need to register for the Spring Symposium by emailing [kraus6311@comcast.net](mailto:kraus6311@comcast.net). You will then be emailed a Meeting Invitation. Click on the link provided which will take you directly to the Zoom software and enter you into the meeting. We will be recording this presentation and make it available on the NIHS website in the near future.



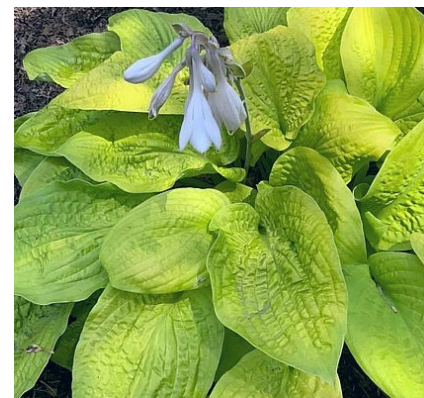
*Richard Hentschel*

## 2021 NIHS Sponsor Plants

By Mike Kraus



*H. 'Blazing Hot'*



*H. 'Giantland Puckered Crevice'*



*H. Cosmic Iceberg'*

The NIHS Sponsor Plant Program was designed for the benefit of our members. Once again we have selected some high quality cultivars from two of our member vendors, Bob Solberg and Jeff Miller. You will receive field grown divisions that are ready to be placed in your garden after the threat of frost.

This year's offerings are five outstanding cultivars priced significantly below retail for our members. A couple are new introductions that you will not find available at your local garden centers.

**H. 'Blazing Hot'- (\$16.00)** This hosta is a sport of 'Blaze of Glory' from Mark Zilis and Bob Solberg (2020). This new hosta is HOT! Everyone loves a large variegated yellow hosta. The wide green margin perfectly frames the bright yellow center as the leaves emerge in the Spring. The leaf centers do green up as it gets hot. Forms a large mound at 36" wide x 20" tall.

**H. 'Giantland Puckered Crevice'- (\$25.00)** This is one of Jeff Miller's introductions at Land of the Giants Hosta Farm. The size is listed as medium – large. It is a super plant with rounded, very corrugated, very rugose golden yellow leaves that measure 12" x 10". Jeff says "everyone who sees it, wants it".

**H. 'Cosmic Iceberg'- (\$13.50)** A new hosta from Rod Kuenster makes a medium/large mound of really blue, unruly leaves that are nicely corrugated. A 'cool' plant for your 'cool' garden. *Continued next page*

### Important Information

**Members only** are eligible to order plants and there is a limit of **one plant per membership** for each of the five cultivars. We have ordered 25 of each cultivar and orders will be filled on a "first come, first serve" basis.

**The order deadline is Friday April 23<sup>rd</sup>.**

**Pick-up Locations:** Once orders are placed we will provide options convenient for you to pick up your hostas.

**New this year**, all sales will be handled through the NIHS website and you will pay securely via credit card using Square or Google Pay. This is a secure member's only page. If you find that you are unable to complete this type of transaction, please contact me directly at [kraus6311@comcast.net](mailto:kraus6311@comcast.net) to see if we can accommodate your desired purchase.

**See next page for Ordering Information**

## 2021 NIHS Sponsor Plants

continued

**H. 'Lemon Snap'**- (\$13.00) Bright yellow leaves on bright red petioles. This is Bob Solberg's next generation of yellow/red hybrids. 'Lemon Snap' is incredibly stout and a sturdy yellow mound with rounded, cupped and lightly puckered leaves that are held on upright, deep red petioles. The red creeps into the center vein on most leaves. The lavender flowers are fertile for you hybridizers. Small-medium mound at 20" wide x 10" tall and leaves are 5" x 4".



*H. 'Lemon Snap'*

**H. 'Truly an Honor'**- (\$15.00) This is another Rod Kuenster introduction from Iowa City. It is a spectacular hosta with blue leaves. It grows really well and forms a nice medium sized clump. This hosta will never be sold by Land of the Giants Hosta Farm, only donated to hosta societies to sell to their members. Jeff Miller says "It is truly an honor to support hosta friends and their societies."



*H. 'Truly an Honor'*

### Ordering Instructions

Here are the step-by-step instructions. We are initiating a Member's Only password protected page to accommodate the Sponsor Plant sale.

1. Go to our website: <http://www.northernillinoishostasociety.org> and scroll across the navigation bar to find **Member's Only Tab** on the far right side.
  2. Click on the Member's Only Tab at which time you will be asked to enter a password. The password will be provided to you via an email from our NIHS Gmail account. Please do not share this password with non-members.
  3. After the password is accepted go to the **Spring Plant Sale & Pick-Up page**. When you are on that page, you can view each hosta's image, read the description and decide which hosta(s) you will buy.
  4. Next click **add to cart**. You will be taken to another page where you will **indicate your quantity of "1" plant** for that cultivar. To purchase your next hosta, you will click on the **back arrow** located in the top left corner of the screen to return to the main **Spring Plant Sale & Pick-Up page**. Repeat this process until you are done selecting your hosta(s). Each time you add your quantity to the cart, you will see a running subtotal of how many plants you have ordered.
  5. Click on the **checkout button** and provide the information required for Square or Google Pay (GPay). An email receipt will be provided at the completion of the order.
  6. For questions navigating the website contact Stevie Meginness at [sameginn@aol.com](mailto:sameginn@aol.com).
- In May, after receiving the hostas from our vendors, you will be contacted, indicating your hosta(s) are ready for pick up with a listing of available pick up locations. Please indicate the location you would like to pick up your plants. You will be given the contact information to schedule an appointment for your pick up.

# HOSTA HAPPENINGS



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**First Ever Hosta Caravan to Wis June 26****By Mark Rekoske**

*D*ue to the current pandemic and concerns about government restrictions on gatherings, the NIHS will not sponsor a bus tour in 2021. I certainly hope that we will be able to resume bus tours in 2022. However, the pandemic has not dampened my enthusiasm for touring hosta gardens both near and far. Therefore, I am planning our first-ever “Hosta Caravan” for Saturday, June 26.

The plan is not yet final, but I expect to include a couple of gardens in historic Cedarburg, Wisconsin as well as a terrific shopping opportunity with one of our member-vendors. The itinerary will be less structured than our usual bus tour so you will be able to spend more or less time in a particular garden as you choose. I encourage you to share the drive with family and friends you feel safe having in the close quarters of your vehicle. By June many of us will have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 so safer travel should be assured.

**The garden of Glenn and Terry Herold**—When Glenn, a horticulture professor, retired from Illinois Central College in 2011, he and Terry moved from Peoria to Cedarburg. They now garden

*Herold Garden front beds**Jack's Hostas front display bed*

on a one acre lot in Cedarburg. The garden includes about 1000 different plants, including many hostas, conifers, Japanese maples, other perennials and woody plants. Glenn is a past president of the Midwest Regional Hosta Society. He frequently lectures and writes about plants. He blogs on the Cottage Gardener at [wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com) and regularly posts on Facebook. A leisurely tour of the Herold garden is a necessity for any serious gardener.

**Jack's Hostas**—Jack Barta also gardens in Cedarburg, just blocks from its historic downtown on a quiet tree-lined street on about an acre. His growing areas spill onto neighboring properties. Jack cautions that his is not a display garden as he grows hostas to sell. However, in the front yard, Jack grows many beautiful hostas interspersed with other plants and Japanese maples in a relaxing design. Other parts of his property have other functions. In some areas hostas are lined out in the ground in rows. Other areas have potted plants organized by cultivar, so that he can quickly gather the ones he wants to take to sell. The garden also includes a pergola used for potting, dividing and displaying hostas in pots.

*Continued next page*



## First Ever Hosta Caravan to Wis June 26

continued



*Cedarburg Mill*

Jack's Hosta's was very popular with our bus tour attendees in June 2016 and I am sure it will not disappoint. A 2021 price list is not included yet, but here is a link to the Jack's Hostas website. [Hostas for Sale by Jack's Hostas in WI](#)

**Historic Downtown Cedarburg**—This is a popular destination, especially in the summer. Numerous breweries, wineries and distilleries are found in Cedarburg as well as more than a dozen restaurants. The historic Cedarburg Mill, the Cedar Creek settlement and a multitude of shops occupy the center of town. Cedarburg should make a great stop for lunch or an early dinner. Coincidentally, June 26 is the day of the annual Cedarburg Strawberry Festival so parking will likely be at a premium. However, extra street vendors and artists will display their offerings and casual outdoor pop-ups will have food available, too.

Cedarburg is easily reached via Highways I-94 and I-43 about 1.5 hours north of O'Hare International Airport. If you want to join us on the first-ever Hosta Caravan please email me at [marekoske@gmail.com](mailto:marekoske@gmail.com) by May 20<sup>th</sup> so I can tell our garden hosts how many visitors to expect. Attendance is free, and I will provide hours, addresses, driving directions as well as information about Jack's Hostas inventory by return email.

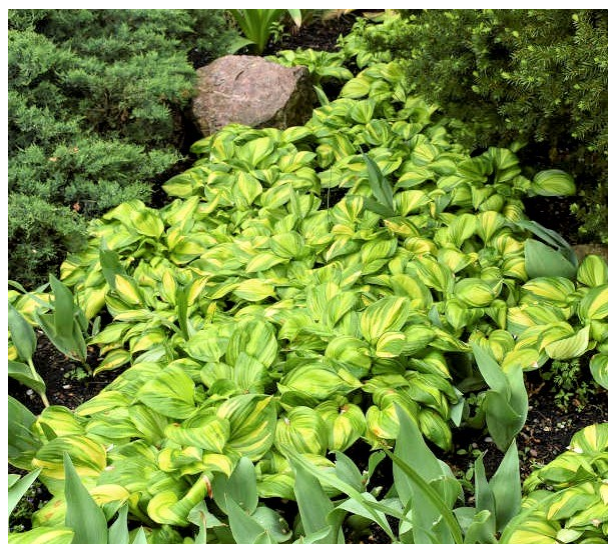


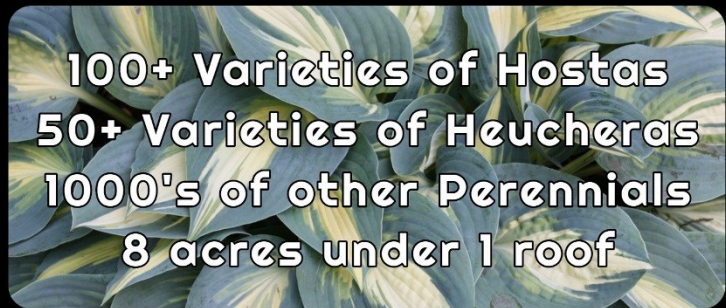
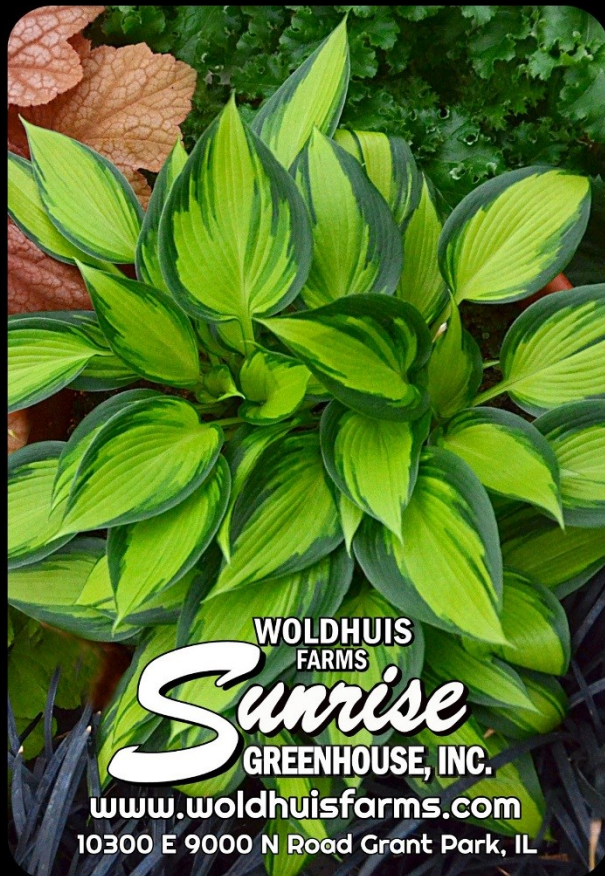
***Hosta 'Rainbow's End'***

***AHGA Hosta of the Year***

This unique hosta exhibits incredibly variegated, shiny foliage. The bright yellow leaves of good substance have dark green margins that jet into the center, and the center brightens to creamy white in summer.

H. 'Rainbow's End' forms a medium sized mound of attractive foliage in the landscape. In late summer, showy red scapes carry the dark lavender, tubular flowers. It is a TC sport of H. 'Obsession'. *Pics from Walters Gardens*





## Hosta Garden Walk Preview Enchanting Estate In Elgin

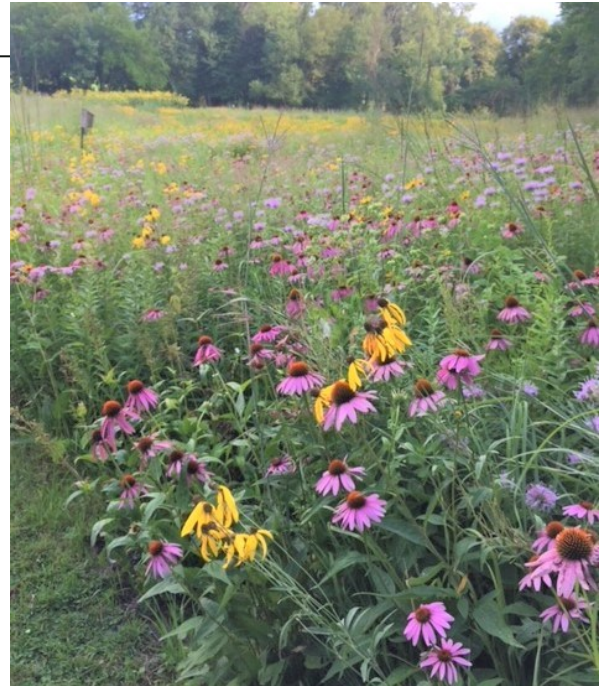
*R*achell & Aubrey Neville welcome you to explore their 50+ acres among several gardens, burr oak trees, shagbark hickory, the lawn and 2 acres of restored tall grass prairie on **July 25.**

Meander along Stoney Creek that provides several enchanting waterfalls and a pond. Hostas accent the paths adjoining the creek. Wander several different gardens such as a native, butterfly, cutting, and vegetable garden and explore on the garden paths.

Visit the Buggy Barn Museum with a display of horse drawn milk wagons and a large milk bottle collection from local dairies.

A golf cart will be available for those not able/wanting to walk the trails.

Aubrey Neville— ‘The star of the show will be the prairie. The pictures show the plants in bloom, but you can only get the real feel for it by walking through it. I never understood what it was like for the pioneers to cross the prairie until I moved to Illinois in my 40's. It's breath taking and intimidating all at the same time.’



*Pics by Aubrey & Rachell Neville*





## Spring Plant Sale

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Members receive three issues per year of The Hosta Journal, which includes color photos of hostas, reports on the national convention, scientific info concerning current research pertaining to hostas and advertisements of interest to hosta families.

Dues for one year are \$30 for an individual and \$34 for a family.



## New Member Welcome!!

*Welcome to our newest hostaphiles!*

Donald & Evelyn Bertini, Winfield

Morgan Corny, Palos Heights

Dawn Diggs, Dyer, IN

Phyllis Kramer, North Aurora

Sam McCord, Cedar Rapids, IA

Jeff & Ellen Meyer, Bartlett

Liz Omura, North Aurora

David & Molly Zacker, St. Charles



## Join the Northern Illinois Hosta Society

Join the NIHS by going to our website [www.NorthernIllinoisHostaSociety.org](http://www.NorthernIllinoisHostaSociety.org) and scroll over on the navigation bar to Membership. You can pay your membership dues on-line on our secure server or print out an application form and mail to our membership secretary with a check **payable to NIHS**. Pls mail to: Stevie Meginness, Membership Secretary, 84 Dunham Place, St. Charles, IL 60174 with your check for \$25. Please include your name(s), address, phone #, and current email address.

Family membership dues of \$25 for 2 years include email versions of 5 newsletters.

Email us at [NI.hosta@gmail.com](mailto:NI.hosta@gmail.com). Call Stevie at 331-235-4114 . Visit our website @ [www.NorthernIllinoisHostaSociety.org](http://www.NorthernIllinoisHostaSociety.org) and visit us on Facebook.



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- Join us for a great plant selection, speakers and The Warehouse on Park will be open for those who would like a glass of wine or a craft beer. Check out our website & Facebook for more details.
- Watch for upcoming DIY's, special speakers and great deals. Ask about our Green Thumb Club for member perks

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## Hosta Garden At Cantigny Park

### Will Reopen Soon Volunteers Needed!

By Barbara King

**G**OOD NEWS!! The Cantigny Park Hosta Garden will welcome back NIHS volunteers beginning in late April—without the limitations they faced last year because of the pandemic.

The curtailed activities and reduced numbers of NIHS volunteers last summer were a disappointment to all of us who enjoy visiting and working in the garden. Because of Covid, we were not allowed to start our annual cleanup until early July, although Cantigny staff had by then made a good start on it. Thanks to the efforts of our smaller volunteer corps, the garden looked terrific after several days of hard work.

Liz Omura, Cantigny Horticulture Department Volunteer Coordinator, recently let us know how much the staff appreciates our efforts. Here is an excerpt:

“Cantigny Director of Horticulture, Scott Witte, has asked that you share in your newsletter how excited he is to have the entire dedicated corps of Hosta Garden volunteers back in the gardens in 2021! Obviously, as gardeners at heart, we're all thrilled to be able to get out there and get the real spring season underway! And, we're confident

that even more visitors will be chomping at the bit to visit Cantigny this year and walk the gardens as a respite from being cooped up with all the snow, cold and Covid restrictions.

With the Hosta Garden right outside the Visitors Center, it is a focal point for all our guests and must be not only a lovely garden in its viewing rights but also used as a teaching tool. Please know how grateful not only our department but all Cantigny staff and our visitors are to be able to enjoy and learn about

hostas and their companions in the shade. “



*Pic from October 2019*

***We will definitely need more volunteers to help maintain the standard we have set over the past few years. And, with NIHS scheduled to host the Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention next year, we want to use our 2021 time***

***to make sure it looks its best so we can proudly share it with convention attendees in 2022.***

We've anticipated that you might want to know what's involved in being an NIHS Cantigny volunteer. The Q & A's on the following page will explain. Keep in mind one of the most special aspects of helping in the hosta garden: ***It's fun!*** You get to spend time in the relaxed atmosphere of a beautiful garden, visiting with congenial fellow gardeners who share your interests.

**HOPE TO SEE NEW AND RETURNING VOLUNTEERS AT CANTIGNY THIS SPRING!** Contact Barbara King to sign up—see information on Following Page.

## BEING A CANTIGNY VOLUNTEER - The Inside Scoop

By Barbara King

**WHAT DO THE VOLUNTEERS DO?** They are the chief maintainers of the Cantigny hosta garden from the spring cleanup in April through the fall cleanup in October. They plant new hostas and companion plants, spread mulch throughout the garden, water, weed, keep the area tidy, and do anything else that's needed to keep the garden looking its best.

**HOW OFTEN WOULD I GET TO HELP OUT?** For most of the years we have been doing this, we have scheduled volunteer workdays every other week, usually Tuesday mornings for 3 hours beginning at 8 or 9 am (depending on weather and what needs to be done) from April through October and into November if necessary. Last year, with fewer volunteers allowed in the garden at one time, we worked nearly every week. About once every six weeks you will receive the upcoming volunteer schedule with a request to sign up for as many or as few of the sessions as you would like. We try to have at least 8 people per session, but we have worked with more or fewer depending on volunteer availability.

**IS THERE ANY TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS?** Cantigny requirements include approximately one hour of training in garden safety each year, and a 1 to 2-hour training session in child safety every other year. Several sessions of garden safety training are usually scheduled in the early spring, and child safety training sessions are scheduled throughout the year. We will let you know when these sessions are to be held so you can sign up for ones that are most convenient for you.

**WHAT ARE THE REWARDS OF VOLUNTEERING?** Aside from the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to create and maintain a beautiful hosta garden for the public to enjoy, additional benefits for regular volunteers include free admission to the park with free parking any



time the park is open; a 10% discount on purchases at the Cantigny Shop, Golf Shop, and on food and beverages (non-alcoholic) at Cantigny restaurants; a gift of a large, gorgeous poinsettia in a color of your choosing at Christmastime; and more. Note that another volunteer category, special events volunteers, may be chosen; the only benefit is free parking on your volunteer days. Special events volunteers need not take the training mentioned above.

**ARE THERE SPECIAL CONDITIONS BECAUSE OF COVID?** Yes, until further notice:

- ◆ A 6' minimum social distance from each other must be maintained in the gardens. If this cannot be done, masks must be worn.
- ◆ Masks must be worn inside all park buildings, including restrooms.
- ◆ Hands can be washed in restrooms at the Visitors Center to the north of the hosta garden or in the restrooms at the park entrance near the First Division Museum to the south.

**QUESTIONS AND SIGN-UP:** Contact Barbara King, [bhk430@att.net](mailto:bhk430@att.net) or 630-643-2263.

*Pics by Ron Asselborn, July 2019*

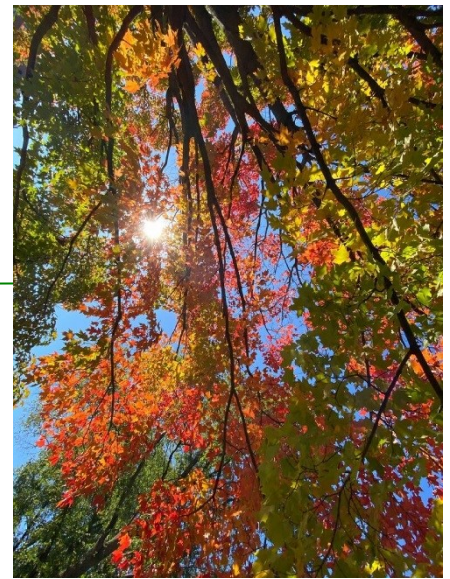




## DAVE'S VIEW

- Fall to Emerging Spring -

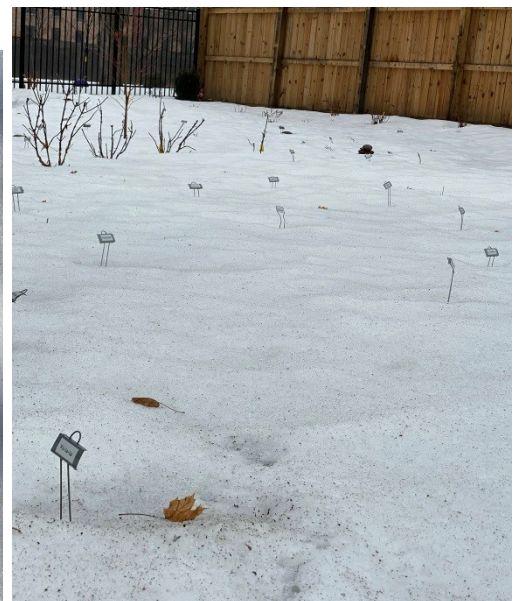
By Dave Trollope



This collection of photos reminds us of the eternal changing seasons and the hope of the emerging spring which is nearly upon us (clockwise from top right). Trees preparing for fall, Deep winter,

Hidden hostas, Cairn with melting snow promising spring, Lady Jane tulip, Hosta 'Fire Island, & Early Stardrift bulbs.

*Pics by Dave Trollope*



**Oh my goodness!  
Is that really a hosta?  
By Joan Poos**

Have you or someone visiting your garden stopped in their tracks staring at a plant at their feet. What is that? Is that really a hosta?

As more and more cultivars are registered, hybridizers are stretching to bring more distinctive plants to market. In the beginning, a variegated hosta was new, exciting and in demand. But the shape of the leaves and the colors were fairly refined. Over the years, new leaf shapes and colors have evolved and become more popular.

My husband and I attend hosta conventions and spend our share of time at the vendor tables. We are sure to come home with something different. Here are a few that are available either in local nurseries or on-line. You may or may not like them. As they say "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder."

*H. 'Praying Hands'* created quite a stir when it was introduced in 1996. The upright rippling leaves are folded and curve in and out looking like 'praying hands'. This unique shape shows off the leaf's attractive, shiny underside and narrow creamy edge. A thick substance and upright stature thwarts slugs. *H. 'Hands Up'* is a tetraploid sport of 'Praying Hands'. I can't yet report on its hardiness as the bunnies in our yard dearly love it.

*H. 'Manzo'* is a fun little Japanese hosta with twisted and contorted white leaves with deep green edges. At first glance the leaves looked to me like spoons radiating out from the center. A vigorous grower, it forms a tangled clump about 5" tall. It will be an eye catcher in a trough or pot where it gets noticed.

*H. 'Allegan Fog'* and a similar cultivar 'Ghost Spirit' have heavily misted leaf centers. The white centers have green flecks and streaks. The centers turn greenish as the season progresses giving the leaves a foggy look.

*H. 'Road Rage'* is truly a love it or hate it kind of hosta. Some of the adjectives I've seen applied to it are weird, ugly, crazy, strange and awesome. This new hybrid has heavy green leaves that are wildly distorted with intense puckering, corrugation, folds and ridges. If you want something funky, this is the one for you.

Continued next page



*H. 'Praying Hands'* photo Joan Poos



*H. 'Manzo'* photo www.nhhosta.com



*H. 'Allegan Fog'* photo Joan Poos



*H. 'Road Rage'*  
photo  
www.nhhos  
ta.com

**Oh my goodness!  
Is that really a hosta?  
continued**

*H. 'Royal Tiara'* is another twisty, contorted plant. The attractive, in my opinion, and uniquely curling leaves have white centers with a green margin. The center often has a darker green color streaking through it. In spite of its strange growth habit, 'Royal Tiara' is vigorous and will add a flair to a container or to one of your beds.

A most unusual but quite distinctive hosta is *H. 'Stitch in Time'*. This unique sport of 'Summer Breeze' features broad, golden leaves, complemented by a small, dark green pattern that appears to be stitched into the leaf center. The pattern is likely the result of a difference in the chromosome count in the different layers of the hosta leaf. Maybe that is why it has proven very difficult to propagate, even with tissue culture. Although a slow grower, 'Stitch in Time' has good leaf substance. This picture was taken just a day or two ago.

The holy grail of hosta hybridizing has been to develop a red-leaved hosta. First there were plants with vividly colored petioles, then came color extending through the mid vein. *H. 'First Blush'* goes a step further. It emerges in the spring with smooth, green leaves that are outlined with a fine red edge. A few weeks after emerging, the green foliage begins to blush red from the leaf tip down. You can almost watch this green hosta turn red. When summer temperatures begin to hover around 90°F, the red blush begins to fade. I saw this plant at the botanical garden in Green Bay WI during the 2019 AHS convention - stunning. Cool temperatures and some direct sun seem to encourage the most intense coloring.

What about a hosta with no color! As we all know from basic high school biology, plants need chlorophyll to grow, a substance lacking in quantity in white hosta. While they certainly look weird in the spring, all these hosta develop some shade of green by late summer. *H. 'Zebra Stripes'* emerges pure white, but once the leaves are fully unfurled they develop green striped veins and some green speckling in the leaf. The leaves continue to get greener as the season progresses.

Maybe it is time to try something new in your garden. Are you ready to give one of these beauties, or "uglies" depending on your point of view, a home in your yard?

*Reprinted from the Newsletter of the St. Louis Hosta Society, Oct 2020.*



*H. 'Royal Tiara' photo by Joan Poos*



*H. 'Stich in Time' photo by Joan Poos*



*H. 'First Blush' photo www.nhhosta.com*



*H. 'Zebra Stripes' photo ww.nhhosta.com*

**MRHS CONVENTION RESCHEDULED FOR  
JULY 14 – 16, 2022**

**T**HE COVID-CURSED CONVENTION first planned and postponed for 2020, then 2021, is now officially back on the MRHS schedule for **July 14 – 16, 2022, in Lisle, IL**. The virus appears to be in retreat, more people receive vaccinations each week, and signs point to a more benign environment next year, when Covid should not be the dominating factor in our lives.

**Hostas Chicago Style** will be hosted by the Northern Illinois Hosta Society (NIHS), and we are trying to make this convention unique: Speakers you haven't heard before to educate and excite you. Fabulous gardens where other distinctive plants and unique designs share top billing with hostas. Two new cultivars from Bob Solberg as choices for a gift hosta. An evening garden visit. A Chicago-style pizza party.

Of course, the features you've always expected at hosta conventions remain part of this one. Reunions with hosta friends. Vendors with the newest hosta cultivars, companion plants and other items for your garden. Hosta leaf show. Seedling display. Good old-fashioned midwestern hospitality.

Make plans now to be part of it, and join fellow hosta lovers in Chicago's western suburb of Lisle for **Hostas Chicago Style, July 14 - 16, 2022**. **Mark your calendars now, and keep an eye out for new developments on the MRHS website, <http://www.midwesthostasociety.org>.**



**MIDWEST REGIONAL HOSTA SOCIETY**

The Midwest Regional Hosta Society represents Region 5 of the American Hosta Society that includes 9 states.

Membership in the society is \$20.00 for 2 years, which includes two issues per year of the newsletter. Please mail a check made payable to MRHS to:

**MRHS Membership  
Kathy Rustad  
4011 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW  
Rochester, MN 55901**

Along with Name, Address, Phone, and email (Most correspondence is by email). For questions email [MRHS.hosta@gmail.com](mailto:MRHS.hosta@gmail.com).

## The Grainthumb: A New Look On Houseplants

by George Graine

“When the world wearies, and society ceases to satisfy, there is always the garden.” --Minnie Aumonier

Let’s set the record straight because a new book “Houseplant Party: Fun Projects & Growing Tips for Epic Indoor Plants” by Lisa Eldred Steinkopf (Cool Springs Press, 2020) is not an encyclopedia of houseplants. The keyword in the title is “party” and this will lead you down a path of discovery where 15 houseplant projects and crafts await you.



With Covid-19 upon us, coupled with an apparent renewed interest in houseplants, this book is sort of like a game changer. If you are still in stay-at-home mode, then houseplant guru Steinkopf is sure to help ease the continuing drama of coping with the new normal brought on

by this virus. Because you are staying at home more than usual, perhaps it is time to take a positive and fresh eye to your collection of old and maybe newly purchased houseplants. In just over 100 pages, the author shines a light on how to look at your collection of houseplants in an exciting and amazing way that perhaps you had not considered.

Now that you have been forced into a “staycation,” take a break from overdue house and yard chores and instead go on a trip with an indoor houseplant party author. You will never regret time spent so enjoyably and productively. To be sure and as stated above, “Houseplant Party” is not an encyclopedia of houseplants. In fact, only 16 plants are described as “The Best Plants for Your Living Space.” Many

of these popular plants are readily available at full-

service garden centers and home and garden box stores. All of these plants include appropriate plant care descriptions and superb color photos.

Following this section is an excellent ten-page discussion on the general care of “Taking Care of Your Houseplants.” Here you will find definitive help on light, temperature, water and fertilizer plus five important tips regarding quick tips for houseplant care. These include: how to improve your light, how to raise humidity, how to improve flowering, how to groom plants and for many folks how not to improve drainage by adding gravel or pot shards to the bottom of a pot.

The piece de resistance and emphasis for this book are the “15 Houseplant Projects and Crafts” plus a section on how to propagate plants by air layering and how to take leaf and stem cuttings in order to enhance your houseplant collection. All of these projects include step-by-step instructions for decorating living art for your available space. You will be surprised at how easy it is to achieve such beauty and at low cost. The point of this book is not simply how to maintain your houseplants but to have fun with nature. You will enhance your home and perhaps your office with a new creative artistic appearance.

Go green! For additional information about the author, her website is [www.thehouseplantguru.com](http://www.thehouseplantguru.com).

*Reprinted from Shady Business Newsletter of The Potomac Hosta Club, Inc. December 2020*



WE'RE GOING  
*Virtual!*

Join us!  
JULY 15–17, 2021

AHS2021.org



AMERICAN HOSTA SOCIETY NATIONAL CONVENTION  
KALAMAZOO, MI

While we're incredibly disappointed that we won't be able to enjoy the fellowship of friends and other hosta lovers in person, it creates a wonderful opportunity to put on the first-ever virtual AHS convention! The team in Kalamazoo is planning an exciting, action-packed virtual event!

Registration is now open! Visit the convention website at [www.ahs2021.org](http://www.ahs2021.org) to register for the event being held **July 15–17**.

- *You'll also learn more about all the great activities and opportunities, like the convention gift Hosta 'Silly String' (mailed to each registrant)*
- *Schedule for speakers, workshops, judges clinics, and more*
- *On-demand, professionally recorded virtual garden tours*
- *Seedling photo competition*
- *And much more! More details about other activities are coming soon, so keep checking the website for updates*
- *As a reminder, registration is **\$49 per household**.*

## The Bigger, the Better: Growing Humongous Hostas

by Don Rawson

Gigantic hostas make tremendous focal points in the garden, whether planted alone as individual specimens or when planted in mass to cover a large area. These impressive monarchs have an allure and beauty all their own which readily attracts our attention whenever we meander through a shady glade. However, humongous clumps of mature hostas seldom are the work of happenstance...they are the product of a gardener's prudent planning, hard work, and persistent care.

As hostas mature, they get larger and larger as long as they are blessed with ideal growing conditions. In this four-part series, I will offer 12 tips on how to provide the perfect environment for cultivating enormous specimens in your own hosta glade. I invite you to join me on a quest to grow some absolutely enormous hostas!

### Tip #1: Select the Best Location

Choosing the right site is the first step to growing these monsters to their full potential. Hostas grow best in an area that offers morning sun and afternoon shade, but they also do well in bright, indirect sunlight as well as in locations with high, overhead dappled shade.

While we usually think of them as shade plants,

Huge hosta seedling of H. 'Clarence Hanna'

pic by Jane Hanna



Don Rawson digging H. 'Royal Empress'

pic by Pam Rawson

8" of good topsoil is okay,  
12" is better,  
more than 12" is ideal.

hostas are not shade LOVERS, they are shade TOLERANT. Take away the sunlight and NO hosta will grow. Do not select a location in deep shade.

Secondly, when selecting a site to grow giant hostas, be sure to think into the future about how large they will really get to ensure they will not be crowded out by a tree or shrub. The root systems need space too, so keep that in mind when you are planting.

Finally, be aware that your hostas need good air flow to grow large, healthy leaves. This may require thinning out the forest canopy which shelters your garden to provide adequate air movement.

### Tip #2: Prepare the Planting Site Well

Once the location is selected, site preparation is the next crucial step, since it's unlikely you've chosen a place where the soil is already rich, loose and well-drained.

With all plants, the right soil is the first and most important thing for them to grow well. To grow humongous hostas in particular, you will need to start

Continued next page

**The Bigger, the Better: Growing Humongous Hostas**  
continued

with the very best soil you can possibly have. Fluffy, deep, rich soil full of nutrients will help your plants achieve their full potential. The better the soil, the healthier the root system, and the healthier the root system, the bigger and better your plant will be.

There is a saying, "No pain, no gain", and that certainly is true in light of the hard work required to create a new garden. As a labor of love, preparing the planting area involves some grunt work, but it's well worth the effort. Your preliminary exertion will reward you well in the end.

About 8" of rich, humusy topsoil is adequate, but 12" is better and even more is ideal.

Whereas a shallow layer of topsoil may allow small hostas to survive, very large hostas have much more extensive root systems and require a larger preparation.

Hostas have lots of delicate little feeder roots that

H. 'Sum and Substance' with Van Wade *pic by Don Rawson*



Extensive root system on H. 'Royal Empress'  
*pic by Pam Rawson*

spread out, so they do not like hard, compact soil. Organic amendments improve soil texture, add nutrients, and increase aeration, water infiltration, and both water- and nutrient-holding capacity. Heavy clay soils especially need a lot of organic matter to loosen the soil particles, and very sandy soils also benefit from the addition of organic matter to retain moisture.

My favorite amendment for hostas is composted manure. Fresh manure can harm plants due to elevated ammonia levels. To avoid this problem, use only aged or composted manure which has been piled for at least six months.

Other good soil amendments include compost, peat moss, leaf mold, shredded bark, and grass clippings. The goal is to provide a better environment for roots. To do its work, an amendment must be thoroughly mixed into the soil, not simply buried at the bottom of the hole. And don't skimp...incorporate a generous amount. With improved aeration and deeper rooting, plants are more efficient in capturing rain and absorbing the necessary moisture they need to grow.

While I will discuss fertilizing your hostas later, let me say at this point that it is

*Continued next page*



## The Bigger, the Better: Growing Humongous Hostas

continued

good to mix in some powdered rock phosphate and Epsom salt. Other amendments sometimes recommended for preparing a hosta bed include green sand (for trace minerals), cottonseed meal, and alfalfa meal.

Hostas are not too fussy about the pH, but grow best when the soil pH level is at 5.8 - 6.5. To know exactly what type of soil you have, you will need to test it.

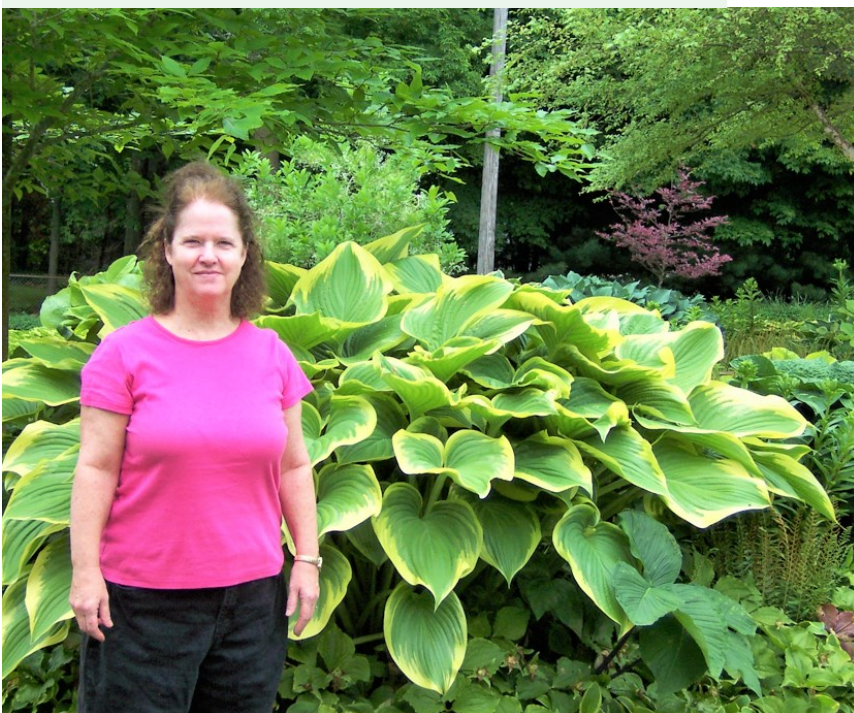
### Tip #3: Plant on a Raised Mound

Now I'm going to share with you a clever technique that I use throughout my landscape.

Have you ever noticed how much larger something appears simply because it's on a raised platform? I admit that this tip isn't actually about how to make your hosta larger, but it nevertheless has a similar effect to those who view it. Planting a hosta on a raised mound will make it *look* bigger, and the bigger that it appears to be,

H, 'Victory' with Pam Rawson

pic by Don Rawson



H. 'Empress Wu'

pic by Tracey Andrade Berrios

the more impressive it is!

Like placing a hosta on a pedestal, a hosta which is on an 8" raised mound will be 8" taller, so a huge hosta which may normally be 36" high now becomes 44" high. And to make the mound inconspicuous, position an assortment of smaller companion plants in the foreground. Just remember that when making a new bed (which includes the liberal addition of organic matter), some settling

will occur, so an 8" mound may very well end up being 4 - 6" high once that occurs. Therefore, on new beds, begin with a mound which is 12" high or more. Once your humongous hosta is fully leafed out and the smaller companion plants are disguising the raised bed, no one will be the wiser. I promise!

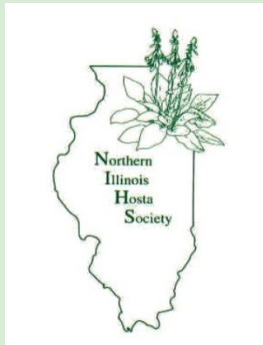
In the **next edition**, I will share three more tips on growing humongous hostas, because if you are like me, the bigger, the better!

*Reprinted from Michigan Hosta Society  
Hosta Happenings Dec 2020*

NIHS Membership Secretary

84 Dunham Place

St. Charles, IL 60174



The Northern Illinois Hosta Society is dedicated to educating the public and promoting the use of hosta in the landscape. NIHS serves the people of Northern Illinois and surrounding areas.

*Calamintha nepeta* ssp.  
Nepeta (Catmint)

Like a cloud of confetti, tiny white flowers appear from early summer to fall. Undemanding and dependable, calamint provides the perfect foil for other summer bloomers and foliage. This full-sun perennial has a low mounding or bushy habit, ideal for the front of the border, rock gardens, and more.

*Pic by Stonehouse Nursery*



**Perennial Plant of the Year 2021**



We're on the Web ! [www.NorthernIllinoisHostaSociety.org](http://www.NorthernIllinoisHostaSociety.org)

Visit us on Facebook

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*Hosta 'Lemon Snap' available to members thru our Sponsor Plant sale—see page 6 for more information.*

