



Volume 22, Issue 2

March, 2021



President
Phyllis Weidman

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

By the time you read this the snow and freezing temperatures should be gone. They did make getting around even more difficult, but we all should be used to staying at home. Snow serves as an insulator from the cold temperatures, preserves the moisture in the soil and provides water to the soil as it melts. Snow also provides fun time for my neighbor's girls to sled down my driveway. We should be grateful.

Spring temperature will bring lots to do. I can hardly wait to get out into the garden. I need to cut off grasses, trim shrubs and rake up those leaves I missed in the fall. Lots to do and many sore muscles ahead. It is always exciting while cleaning an area to discover new growth.

The Society is also hoping for new growth. We need our members to remember we exist. Yes, there is a group of people that love hostas. We love growing them and learning the ins and outs of the plant. There are members who can answer almost any question you have. It is always more fun to talk to a person than look for information on the internet. I want to encourage you to come to meetings and let others know we exist.

The Society is getting ready to have summer meeting. Meetings will be outdoors. Gardens and parks will be our locations. I encourage you to volunteer your garden; contact Josh Jagger (nemojosh82@yahoo.com). He is starting off 2021 with a visit to his own garden in Webster Groves. Fun and learning in a garden. See you all there and stay well.

Phyllis

2021 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 16	Garden Walk/Meeting 1:30 PM, Home of Josh Jagger
June	Garden Walk/Meeting Time and location TBA
July 8-10	Midwest Regional Hosta Convention Lisle, IL
July 15-17	AHS National Hosta Convention (Virtual) Kalamazoo, MI
July	Garden Walk/Meeting TBA
September 20	Meeting with Speaker TBA 1:30 PM, TBA
October 18	Meeting with Speaker TBA 1:30 PM, TBA
November	Board Meeting Time and location TBA

Time to Mulch, but how much is enough?

The American Hosta Society recommends applying no more than 2-3" of mulch. Too much can lead to vole problems by providing a covering that is warm and easy to tunnel through. Keep the mulch away from the crowns to avoid rot and other diseases.

Use the following calculations to determine how much to buy.

Length in feet X Width in feet = Total square feet

Length in feet X Width in feet X Depth in feet = Total cubic feet

The most commonly sold bags contain about 2 cubic feet

27 cubic feet = One cubic yard

One cubic yard will fill roughly 1/2 a pick-up truck bed

Example: A hosta bed 10 feet by 12 feet with a 3 inch layer of mulch

$10 \times 12 \times .25 = 30$ cubic feet

Divide by 2 = 15 2 cubic feet bags or divide by 3 = 10 3 cubic feet bags

One cubic yard will cover 160 square feet at a depth of 2"

One cubic yard will cover 108 square feet at depth of 3"

One 2 cubic feet bag will cover 7 or 8 square feet at a depth of 3"

One 3 cubic feet bag will cover 10 square feet at a depth of 2"

It's That Time of Year Put in the work up front!

In like a lion, out like a lamb, that's the age-old promise of the month of March. The long ugly winter of confinement is about to end. March gives the first rays of hope. Starting in the middle of the month, begin watching the junky shrubs and weeds that grow along our highways and back roads. One day they seem brown, barren and depressing, the next there is a green tinge. Just maybe. Quickly that hint becomes reality. Watch Mother Earth come alive again.



photo: missouribotanicalgarden.org

We avid gardeners have been waiting for months for this moment. But we are not the only ones waiting. Slugs! All those overwintering slug eggs are now hatching and any slugs that have survived the winter are beginning to feed regularly and lay even more eggs. It is still chilly outside, maybe even downright cold, but don't procrastinate. Now is the time to attack.

There are a number of natural controls that can be used against slugs such as egg shells, coffee grounds, garlic spray, hair, spun wool, diatomaceous earth, ammonia solutions and beer. Slugs do not like crawling over sharp surfaces. Like many of their human predators, they are attracted to beer and will crawl into a container and drown. The effectiveness of all these methods depends upon your conscious and continuous efforts.

There are two primary types of chemical slug bait, those with metaldehyde or with iron phosphate as the primary ingredient. Both types also contain additives such as yeast to lure the slugs and snails to the bait. Either works well and neither, when used as directed, constitutes significant danger to humans, pets and wildlife. A commonly used brand is SLUGGO and recently introduced SLUGGO PLUS. SLUGGO PLUS contains an added substance called spinosad. This is a substance derived from a bacterium found in the soil and is effective in killing sow bugs, cutworms, thirps and other insects.

Spinosad is an ingredient in many sprays used by farmers and in orchards to control crop pests such as thirps and fruit flies. Numerous studies have been done to test the toxicity of spinosad to bees. According to several internet articles on the subject, the collective evidence from these studies indicates that once spinosad residues have dried on plant foliage, generally three hours or less, the risk to honeybees is negligible. The majority of studies conducted have indicated that spinosad does not adversely affect honeybee behavior, brood or queen. When used according to the approved product label recommendations, it would be safe to foraging worker bees, queen and brood. Note that SLUGGO PLUS is not a spray, but a granular substance that is scattered on the ground.

For metaldehyde and iron phosphate baits, all that is necessary is to evenly apply the bait over the infested area at the rate recommended on the product label. More is not better. In about two or three weeks, apply the bait again. This will take out many of the slugs hatched from eggs after the first application. Applied properly, more treatments will probably not be necessary until late fall when a final application should be applied to knock down the slug population prior to onset of winter. This must be done each year.

Whether you use slug baits or organic controls, **the key is to get started early**, just as the pips are emerging from the soil. Waiting until holes appear is much too late – many generations of slugs are already thriving in your garden

Landscaping Tips for Backyard Gardeners: Part II

These cruel winter months present a perfect time to think about redesigning or embellishing your garden. Perhaps your collection of plants has grown too large for your space and you need to expand an existing bed or create another one. Perhaps over the years your beds have taken on a haphazard look and just need to be reorganized. Perhaps you are just tired of the same-old, same-old. The last issue of the newsletter contained some tips about how to lay out or expand beds to form a satisfying cohesive design. Now the fun part begins – populating these spaces with plants.

Where to start. How about at ground level. The key to a successful garden starts before the first plant is placed in the ground. The old garden adage “Happy plants need happy roots” is definitely true. A poor root system means your plants cannot grow to their full potential and leaves them susceptible to damage from disease and insects.

First let’s talk about soil preparation. In my mind this is probably the most important and least interesting garden chore – one best left to my husband. If plants are called the soul of the garden, then soil must be its heart. What is the makeup of your soil? It is imperative that you know. The best way to do this is with a soil test. As soon as the ground thaws is a good time to perform this chore.

There are three basic types of beds you might be preparing: one that has never been planted before, one that has been planted before but is now empty of all plants, or a bed with existing trees, shrubs, bulbs or perennials. The preparation of new or empty existing beds is very similar. A new bed has the extra step of removing sod if present.

First comes the hard work, turning soil over with a spade or shovel to a depth of 12 inches. The idea is to aerate the soil, improve drainage and work in needed nutrients. Work the soil only when it is not terribly wet or dry. If too wet, the soil will form clumps and compact; too dry, digging will destroy soil structure. If you are fortunate to have a tiller, this will help, but a typical garden tiller will not reach that depth. Some gardeners feel tillers compact the soil and break its structure. My husband prefers to “double dig” when making a new bed or reviving an existing bed. This means he turns the soil to a depth of 18 inches.

To double dig a bed, start by digging a 12-inch wide trench to the depth of your spade, around nine inches, from one end of the bed to the other and put this soil in a wheelbarrow or on a tarp. Then gently loosen the soil at the bottom of the trench by pushing a garden fork in the ground as deep as possible and rocking it back and forth. Spread a couple inches of compost in the bottom of the trench and work it into the soil with the fork. Now dig another 12-inch trench adjacent to the first trench and use that soil to fill the first trench. Just let the new soil slide off the spade rather than turning it over. Now loosen the soil at the bottom of this second trench and work in compost just as was done with the first trench. Continue this process until the entire bed has been worked. Use the soil from the first trench which was saved in the wheelbarrow or on the tarp to fill the last trench. Try to avoid walking on the bed as that will cause the soil to become compacted again.



Double digging

Photo from bobvilla.com

Once you have turned over the soil, spread a layer of organic matter or compost two to three inches thick over the bed and then mix the compost into the soil with a spade. Adding compost improves the soil by enhancing its structure and adding nutrition. Use material from your compost pile, if you have one, or check with your local garden center. Finally, rake the surface to provide a level planting surface.

If a bed already contains plants, be careful not to harm existing roots. You still want to add two to three inches of organic matter, but work it into just the top layer of soil. Be careful not to smother the crowns of existing plants.

After you plant the bed, top-dress with either another layer of compost or mulch. This keeps weeds from growing, helps conserve moisture, regulates soil temperature and makes for a neater look overall. Over a year's time, mulch will break down adding more nutrients to the soil. This is good.

Just as the human body would be a puddle of mush without its skeleton, so would your garden. Add some bones. Unless your borders or beds include trees and shrubs, they will appear low and squat. A good garden needs bulky plants to create a backdrop for other plants and to give a sense of permanence year round. Look out your window. Is your yard a vast tundra or is there some interest?

An interesting garden must have vertical elements as well as horizontal ones. Think about incorporating evergreens into your design. Evergreens have many functions. They provide year round interest, give your yard some privacy, act as windbreaks and provide some shade. They can be a canvas for other plantings or show-stopping specimens standing on their own. Evergreens grow in a wide range of sizes and shapes, from tall columnar to squat globe-shaped. Color and texture vary – shades of green and blue, gold-tipped needles, wonderfully shaped cones. When buying, do your research. Check their sun/shade requirements and hardiness. Many conifers do not thrive in the Midwest not because of cold, but because of our hot humid summers.

If you have the space and your yard is not already blessed with a shade tree, plant one now. Oak, honey locust, hickory and ginkgo are perfect for hosta gardens, providing that high shade canopy these plants love. But they take time to grow. Birches and many kinds of maples are fast growers but not ideal because their roots form fibrous mats close to the surface. These roots steal water and nutrients from everything planted under their dripline. Even though birches are messy trees, I love their interesting exfoliating bark and light airy feel. They add to the garden's appeal. Don't be dismayed if this is what you have. There are ways to successfully plant under trees with fibrous roots, it just requires a bit more care and ingenuity on your part.



Bruce and Chick Buehrig



Diana and Craig Plahn entrance



Janelle Criscione Blue Atlas Cedar

To these big bones add smaller ones. Understory trees such as redbuds, dogwoods and Japanese maples provide balance. They fill that void between the height of mature trees and ground plantings. Each of these species come in a wide variety of shapes and colors. The vibrant pink flowers of our native Eastern Redbud (*Cornus florida*) are striking, but there are also varieties with white blooms and ones with interesting leaves such as golden ‘Ace of Hearts’, purple ‘Forest Pansy’ or variegated ‘Carolina Sweetheart’.

Instead of a native dogwood, consider a Kousa (*Cornus kousa*) or a Pagoda (*Cornus alternifolia*). A Kousa dogwood blooms later than the native and holds its flowers much longer. The white blooms appear to float on the tops of the branches – a great tree to view from a balcony. A Pagoda dogwood features unique horizontal branches that are layered and turn up on the tips. Both give a different look to your garden.

Countless varieties of Japanese maples are available, displaying a large assortment of leaf shapes and a kaleidoscope of colors ranging from green to orange, red, purple and variegated tones. Although a readily available cultivar, sunlight passing through the burgundy leaves of a ‘Bloodgood’ Japanese maple is stunning. All these understory trees do well in full sun or shade. Deciduous trees let through dappled sunlight and can easily be incorporated into a large border or a small urban yard.

So far our yard has two tiers – large high canopy trees and smaller understory trees. Time to add a third layer. Bushes and shrubs are an essential part of the backbone of the garden. Most are easy to care for and will remain attractive for long periods of time. Either deciduous or evergreen, they will fill your landscape with greenery, color and fragrance. These woody plants are available in a wide range of shapes, sizes and flowering habits. Depending on variety, they can function as foundation plantings or privacy screens to hide eyesores like air conditioners or water meters. They can attract birds and butterflies with their life sustaining nectar and berries. They give bulk to beds and borders and can form a harmonious transition between shade-loving and sun-loving plants.



Pam and Chester Wolkowitz use conifers, peonies and Japanese maples for vertical structure and a tall phlox for a dash of color.



Martha and Paul LaFata's front border is anchored by a Japanese maple. A backdrop of tall deciduous trees provide shade for their hostas.

Forsythia and azaleas start the gardening season. Just when we can't stand another day of grey skies, mittens and scarves, out pop the bright yellow blooms of Forsythia. Place them toward the back of your border and let those yellow globs wink at you as you walk along. In St. Louis the middle of April heralds the azalea show. A dazzling display of pinks, lavenders, orchids, reds and whites brighten the landscape. Because of the high pH values of our soil and water, azaleas are not the easiest shrub to grow in St. Louis. But with amendments of spagham peat moss, ferrous sulphate and azalea food, they will flourish. What a pick-me-up.

Viburnum, hydrangeas, lilacs, peonies and roses continue the cascade of blooms throughout the growing season. Then Rose of Sharon kicks in during the fall months. Don't overlook the greens of small conifers, boxwoods and hollies. Every year new cultivars of these old favorites hit the market

Look what's happened to your grandmother's snowball hydrangea. Consider a lace-cap variety or an Oakleaf for a woodsier look. Roses have evolved. Hybrid teas are beautiful, but in St. Louis black spot is a constant problem. Instead opt for one of the Knockout cultivars. There is a Viburnum to fit your every need. Want fragrance, plant a Korean Spice; need a privacy screen, select a Doublefile or a Leatherleaf. Peony blooms no longer need to be casualties in the first rainstorm. There are beautiful and fragrant tree peonies and the new intersectional (ITOH) cultivars. There are early blooming fern leaf peonies and later blooming single petal forms that hold up well in stormy weather.

To explore the world of trees, shrubs and bushes, take a walk through our local nurseries. These men and women are well versed in what grows well in our area. They are knowledge about light and water requirements and can give you a good idea of the size of a mature specimen. There is bound to be one that is just right for your space.

The bones transform your garden, creating a framework of year-round interest, shape, color and texture. In the next issue of the newsletter will be a discussion of how to fill in this framework.



Karen and Greg Frimel's
Tricolor Beech



Horizontal form of a Pagoda
Dogwood



Doublefile Viburnum



Fern leaf peony



Azaleas in Dave & Joan Poos' garden

Before you plant, get a Soil Test

I'm sure most of us have received calls from our doctor's office about scheduling an annual "wellness exam". This is encouraged regardless of the state of our health. Now is a good time to perform a wellness exam on your garden beds. All gardeners should be intent on improving their soil. In addition to adding nutrients, adding organic matter and correcting pH are equally important. These three actions improve the soil by increasing water holding capacity, fertility, tilth, and encouraging beneficial organisms. Healthy soil equals healthy plants.

What will a soil test tell you? It will give you the pH (acidity or alkalinity) of the soil and recommend how much lime or sulfur to apply (some gardens don't need either) for the plants you have specified. It gives the amounts of phosphorus, potassium, calcium and magnesium that are currently in the soil as well as the organic matter of the soil. The higher the percentage of organic matter, the less fertilizer you are going to need. The test will then give specific recommendations on how much nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium to use to augment the chosen area. Most importantly, if you have any questions, the number of your local extension specialist is listed on the bottom of the soil test report.

This is what my husband did before he rejuvenated a bed containing mostly daylilies. He removed the first two inches of soil from an area, then dug a six to eight inch deep hole and put the soil in a pail. This is the depth where roots grow. He sampled two or three different areas of the same bed. This soil was then mixed and allowed to dry. He put about two cups of the mix into a plastic bag and took it to the MU Extension office in Kirkwood. The sample was then sent to a lab for analysis. The cost for processing was \$25. Results are mailed or emailed to you within two weeks.

Below is a portion of the report he received on his test:

SOIL TEST RESULTS		RATING					
		Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Excess
pHs	7.1	*****					
Phosphorus (P)	357 lbs/a	*****					
Potassium (K)	380 lbs/a	*****					
Calcium (Ca)	6417 lbs/a	*****					
Magnesium (Mg)	680 lbs/a	*****					
Organic Matter:	12.7 %	Neutr. Acidity: 0.0 meq		CEC: 19.4 meq			
Fertilizer & Limestone Recommendations (lbs/1000 sq ft)							
Crop		Nitrogen (N):	Phosphorus(P ₂ O ₅)	Potash (K ₂ O)	Zinc(Zn)	Sulfur(S)	LIME
9 DAYLILLY perennial bedding plants		0.0	0.0	0.0			0

The very first item on the left is the pH value. Soils less than 7 are considered acid, those above 7 are alkaline. Most plants prefer a pH between 6 and 7. 7.1 is fine for daylilies, but would be much too high for azaleas. The chart also shows this bed is high or very high in all tested components and has 12.7 % organic matter. It recommends that nothing be added. Don't add fertilizer as phosphorus and potassium levels are already high.

MU Extension Office
 St. Louis County
 132 E Monroe Ave
 Kirkwood, MO 63122
 314-400-2115
 M-F 8:30 – 4:30

Brightside St. Louis
 4646 Shenandoah Ave.
 St. Louis, MO 63110
 314-772-4646
 M-F 9:00 – 4:00

Gateway Greening
 2211 Washington Ave.
 St. Louis, MO 63103
 314-588-9600
 M-Th 8:00 – 3:30

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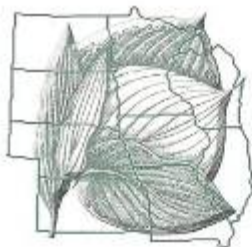
Contact: Dave Poos
9904 Crestwood Drive
Crestwood, MO 63126
david.poos@att.net

Dues: \$7 per year, \$18 for three years
Family or Individual

Meetings held at the **Creve Coeur Government Center, 300 N. New Ballas, 63141** (between Ladue Road and Olive), unless otherwise noted.

Visit our Web site: www.stlouishosta.org

Visit us on Facebook, St. Louis Hosta Society



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:

Barbara Schroeder,
Treasurer
1819 Coventry Dr.
Champaign, IL 61822

along with Name, Address, phone, and email (Most correspondence is by email). For questions email MRHS.Hosta@gmail.com.



AMERICAN HOSTA SOCIETY

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

Membership checks should be made out to "AHS," and mailed to:

Sandie Markland, AHS Membership Secretary
P O Box 7539
Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948

Dues for one year are \$30 for an individual and \$34 for a family. For more information, visit the AHS website: <http://www.americanhostasociety.org/>