



Volume 25, Issue 7

August-September, 2024

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



President Gene Pulliam

Dog Days of Summer

As I sit down to put this message together, I'm enjoying being inside for just a little bit because of the excessive heat that looms around us this time of the year.

Although we haven't had the continuous heat yet this year, I am reminded of those years growing up in the country when we referred to this as the Dog Days of Summer. It's the time of year when the heat seems to keep coming at us and we wear down

Trying to keep our gardens going, watering almost non-stop and days where we are just done and question ourselves about why we are doing this gardening in the first place. It's just plain hot!

But actually, that's not most of us. We know this is all part of being gardeners and we give those hostas more and more water to keep them in the best shape possible. We know these days won't last, the end of Summer will start bringing cooler days and we will take a deep breath anticipating the cool mornings of Fall.

So as summer starts winding down, take the cooler opportunities to cut the scapes off that are starting to look tattered, remove those dried leaves that start showing up and know that summer will soon wind down and the cooler days will be here and we can start planning our gardens for next year. Gardening always has exhaustion of the hot days of summer and the anticipation of another season to keep doing what we love so much. After all, we are hosta enthusiasts that enjoy the challenges of this hobby of gardening for what tomorrow brings!

Thank you for all you do to keep moving forward for a new day in the world of growing hostas; even when the Dog Days of Summer press on toward better days of gardening!

Gene

2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

August 11	Meeting with Speaker Ginny Johnson 2:00 PM, CBEC Building 4651 Shaw, St. Louis, MO 63110
September 15	Meeting with Speaker Bob Solberg 2:00 PM, CBEC Building
October 20	Meeting with Speaker 2:00 PM, CBEC Building
November	Board Meeting Time and location TBD
December	Holiday Party Time and location TBD
June 5 – 7, 2025	AHS National Convention and Midwest Regional Hosta Convention (combined conventions) Peoria, IL

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Kait Honeyager and Sal Candela of St. Louis, MO
Marian and Matthew Charow of Columbia, IL
Vincent Fasanello of St. Louis, MO
Jackie and Ken Ruff of Chesterfield, MO
Sheryl Moschner of St. Louis, MO
Margaret and Jim Hoffmann of Swansea, IL
Deni and Barry Greenberg of Maplewood, MO

It is exciting to have you as new members in our society. The next two meetings will feature exciting speakers and topics. We hope that you will be able to join us so that old and new members can get to know each other.



American Hosta Growers Association 2024 Hosta of the Year – H. 'Mini Skirt'

Introduced by Walters Gardens in 2013, it has become one of the most popular members of the Mouse family. This is a miniature hosta with wavy leaves having a slightly blue-green center and wide cream-yellow edge. *H. 'Mini Skirt'* is a good grower making a spectacular display either in the ground or a container.
(photo from Walters Gardens web-site)

**August 11, 2:00 PM
CBEC Building
4651 Shaw, St. Louis, MO 63110**

Ginny Johnson

**‘Making the connection: How indigenous
American people use native plants’**



Our August speaker, Ginny Johnson, grew up in St. Louis and spent many hours roaming about in the Missouri Botanical Garden as a child. She subsequently enjoyed a 50 plus year career as a Registered Nurse and spent 29 years in the Air Force in which she attained the rank of Colonel. Her career took her to many fascinating places in the world, including Antarctica.

Having completed the coursework for Advanced Master Gardener, Ginny has been engaged in various roles at MoBot, including Docent, Garden Plant Doctor, Members Board and interpreter for the Tower Grove House. Besides her work at MoBot, Ginny volunteers at ForestReLeaf of St. Louis which grows free trees for different communities.

Ginny is also a member of the St. Louis Herb Society and the Wild Ones which is a national organization promoting the use of native plants in the landscape. Her yard is certified Gold from the Audubon Society for native habitat.

What a busy person. All this explains her interest in the use of native plants as medicine by the Missouri Osage Indians. What plants did the indigenous people use and how were their various medicines concocted? You might be growing such beneficial plants in your backyard or herb garden. Join us in August to discover what easily grown plant might give us relief from all our aches and pains.

Did you hear?

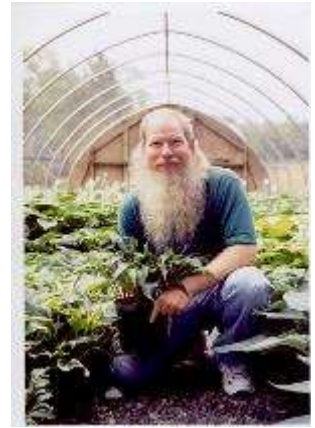
At the 2024 AHS National Convention held a few weeks ago, the AHS Best New Journal Author award was presented to members Chick and Bruce Buehrig. The award was established in 2006 and is awarded to a new author of the best original article printed in The Hosta Journal or the On-line Journal as selected by the judging committee. It is in recognition of the importance to share information of interest to AHS membership.

Over the years Chick and Bruce have written many articles concerning garden design using hostas and the use of conifers in the shade garden. Bruce has given many presentations on these subjects not only to our Society but to other gardening clubs and garden centers. They are generous with the gardening knowledge they have acquired.

Chick and Bruce have created one of the most spectacular private gardens in the country at their home in north St. Louis County. Two years ago, our members were privileged to visit. Congratulations to Chick and Bruce for another well-written and informative article.

**September 15, 2:00 PM
CBEC Building
4651 Shaw, St. Louis, MO 63110**

Bob Solberg
**"Propagation and Production: How new hostas
make their way from the hybridizer to you."**



Bob Solberg

Hosta hybridizing has been a passion of Bob's for almost 30 years. In 2008 he was awarded the Eunice Fisher Distinguished Hybridizer Merit Award by the American Hosta Society for his work with hostas. He has introduced about 100 hostas with more on the horizon. You've met Bob if any of the following hostas reside in your garden:

'Guacamole' (Hosta of the Year in 2002), 'Orange Marmalade', 'Curly Fries' (Hosta of the Year in 2016 and Benedict Medal of Honor), 'One Man's Treasure', 'Sharp Dressed Man' (2019 Benedict Medal of Honor winner) or 'Frozen Margarita'. Just a few of his excellent plants.

Bob has been very active in the American Hosta Society, serving as the Editor of *The Hosta Journal*, the principal publication of the American Hosta Society and as Vice President of AHS. In 2003 he was the recipient of the Alex J. Summers Distinguished Merit Award for his service to AHS. Bob is also co-founder and currently the Executive Secretary of The American Hosta Growers Association, a professional trade organization for hosta nurseries. The members of the AHGA select the Hosta of the Year annually.

Bob is a nationally known lecturer on the subject of hostas and writer of many articles on hostas. He has edited the "Green Hill Gossip" since 1996 and the "Gossip Jr.", a twice-yearly subscription newsletter since 2004. His talks are always entertaining, filled with information and liberally sprinkled with humor and common sense. Join your fellow hostaholics for what promises to be a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

Bob's talk will cover the selection of new hosta seedlings and sports, their propagation in large numbers through tissue culture and the production and marketing of retail ready plants. Also, there will be a peek into the future of what new hostas may be on the horizon.

For more information about Bob, his Green Hill Farm nursery, and his beloved hostas, access <https://www.hostahosta.com/>

Phyllis' Hosta Tip of the Month

Many hostas will be starting to collapse and some are turning a beautiful gold. When the leaves have collapsed and dried, they are easy to remove from your garden. It is a good idea to remove all the leaves and debris from your beds in the fall. Leaves of hostas, as well as leaves from trees. The old hosta leaves lying on the ground provide great places for slugs to lay eggs, or simply hide until the spring, as well as shelter for animals like voles. Tree leaves or too thick mulch will also provide cover for voles. So clean those beds and get ready for whatever type winter we have.

Did you hear?

At the 2024 American Hosta Society Convention held in July in Marlborough, MA, Rob Mortko was honored with the Alex J Summers Distinguished Merit Award. This award is the highest award offered by The American Hosta Society. It is awarded to a member of the Society in recognition of having given outstanding service to the American Hosta Society, the development of the genus *Hosta*, or both. Rob is certainly deserving of this honor.



Rob Mortko

A retired chemical engineer, Rob has put his profession to good use by establishing a tissue culture lab, *Made in the Shade Tissue Culture*, in his home in Olathe Kansas. He is a popular speaker at local, regional and national gardening functions. He has visited St. Louis on several occasions giving informative and entertaining presentations. His articles on hot new hostas regularly appear in "The Hosta Journal". Having served in various positions on the Executive Board of the American Hosta Association and the American Hosta Growers Association, he is currently President of the Midwest Region Hosta Association.

Long time St. Louis Hosta Society members should recognize Rob as a vendor at several of our Vendor Day events. His former nursery supplied plants for some of our Member Plant Sales. Rob is a knowledgeable, entertaining speaker and all-round nice guy. Below are some hosta tips that Rob gave during one of his St. Louis talks that continue to be apropos.

Hostas are really "sun-loving". Most of us grow our plants in too much shade. For maximum vigor, grow the plant in the brightest light it can tolerate. Morning sun is preferred by most hostas, but even hot afternoon sun is tolerated if the plants are given enough water. Water is key. Rob has found that those white-centered, hard-to-grow hostas do well in a greenhouse setting. The lighting supercharges what chloroplasts these plants possess. So don't baby them so much; give them lots of bright light.

Do your hostas wilt during the heat of a St. Louis July or August? The temperature isn't really the problem. The temperature in Rob's greenhouse can get to 120 degrees without damage to his plants. The culprit is lack of moisture – the combination of heat, drying winds and lack of rain. The old rule of thumb of an inch to an inch and one half per week of water may not be enough in the Midwest.

What kind of soil do hostas like? Rob stated that while hostas like moisture, they don't want their feet wet. In our clay soils, organic matter is usually the answer. It helps to create porosity and balances the water holding capacity of the soil. Fertilizer will push plant growth, but it must be followed through with water. The optimum time to apply is four to six weeks before first frost.

What keeps a grower awake at night? – weather, slugs, virus or nematodes. Can't control the weather, so don't waste time worrying. Slugs are not a problem in a greenhouse since plants are grown on elevated tables. In the home garden, they can be controlled. Virus cannot be cured but is not so easily spread if tools, containers, and any other items that come in contact with a diseased plant are properly cleansed. AHS has finished a study to determine ways to control Nematodes. There is now a product on the market that addresses this problem. Nematodes are a pest in warmer climates with their longer growing season.

Season Enders and Extenders of the Hosta and Companion Plant World

by Mike Weber

(Reprinted from the September 2006 issue of the Prairie Hosta Herald newsletter)

That wow feeling and rush of emotion that I felt as I viewed newly emerging or blooming sights every day throughout spring and early summer has long since passed. The drudgeries of watering and weeding chores in the heat and humidity of the summer are more recent memories. Oh, did I mention battling Japanese beetles? And what do my efforts get in return from my semi and shade perennial plants by August and September? A lot of tired, stressed-out hosta or maybe even worse - they're well on their way to saying adios for the seasons!

But wait! Out of my mild despair I see several subtle signs of unique fall beauty. Before going further, a word of caution and a challenge to those hosta lovers who view every budding flower scape as a regular pruning chore! Those homely, non-variegated green to bluish green wall flower hosta are ready to strut their stuff.

It starts in early August with the *Plantaginea* family and their fragrant blooms. Are they pretty? Some are and some aren't, but my nose catches regular scents of jasmine/gardenia on those humid August evenings - a nice pick me up and reward for those endless watering chores and long days at the office! But the show really starts later in the month. Among the parade of stars comes 'Korean Snow' and the *Yingeri* group. Their sports and hybrids have multiple light blue/pink petite flowers. Then there are 'Purple Lady Fingers' and *Clausa* with their long scapes full of pink purple buds that never open. What a nice portrait for seven to ten days. Newly introduced Fujibotan sports six-foot scapes with double light blue flowers. And currently, lowly *Lancifolia* is covered, with gently nodding flower scapes covered with light bluish pink blooms. Note also that it shows no leaf burn (unless you have it in too much sun!) unlike many of its more highly prized, priced and highbrow relatives. If companioned with perennials or Angel Wing Begonia, it's as beautiful a setting and longer lasting than a bed of spring bulbs.

Also, on current display and a personal favorite is 'Raspberry Sorbet'. The red scapes are perfectly balanced above the foliage and covered with 8-10" of pinkish purple flowers that cover more than 50% of the clumps. It too has a non-burning, shiny green, wavy leaf. 'Rhapsody in Blue', 'Spritzer', 'Green Fountains', 'Ozaki Special' and the *pycnophylla* family, in general, are also very respectable contributors of late season flowers. I'm eagerly awaiting the bloom finale of 'Fall Bouquet', *Tardiflora* and 'One Man's Treasure' to give their late season "look at me!"

If, like me, you get frustrated with the heat and end of season stress exhibited by some hostas, try to identify (and/or buy) others that will finish well all the way to hard freeze. In addition to those mentioned, a partial list would include 'Sagae', 'Leading Lady', 'Liberty', most Lachman intros such as 'Torchlight', 'Crusader', 'Tambourine', 'Robert Frost', 'Brave Amherst', as well as many of the *Sieboldiana* family if grown in all day shade.

Another way to offset those early-stressed hostas (that likely put on a beautiful spring show) is to plant a lot of shade loving annuals nearby which overgrow the burned leaves so it refocuses your attention on their color. The hosta foliage provides a nice contrasting texture. Caladiums, Angel Wing Begonias and Coleus will also splash color to liven up those tired areas. And don't forget the beautiful perennial Begonia with its showy leaf and bloom right up to first frost.

In closing, a reminder that to everything there is a season. and in many autumns these tattered hosta leaves turn a golden yellow as they go dormant along with the fall leaf turn, giving us one last show before we can all rest in the winter and look forward to the spring catalogs which will arrive starting in early December!

A Note from your Editor

Fall is fast approaching. Thank Goodness! My husband and I have found this to be a challenging gardening year. The early, early spring seemed to be a blessing. Imagine starting spring at the end of February. But as the season continued, the dark side began to surface. The hosta pips were poking up before we were finished cleaning up, let alone done with mulching. The azaleas were three weeks early and didn't stay at the spring-time party as long as usual. The different flower species bloomed abnormally early so that by the end of June the plants looked like the end of August. Garden tours that were scheduled for peak daylily bloom were instead seeing a sparsity of late bloomers. The daylily foliage was ready to be cut back in the middle of July instead of the middle of August. The hostas looked tired, ready for their winter sleep and it is only August 1.

And then there was the weather - torrents of rain in short amounts of time, mulch washed over the grass, rocks carried from the top of slopes to the bottom, weeks of drought with temperatures in the 90s plus, followed by torrents of rain this time with hail and high winds. Whine, whine, whine. What's a gardener to do? Clean up the mess and hope tomorrow is a better day.

For my husband and me, that better day arrives tomorrow. After 52 years, we have decided to clean off the shovels, hang up the rakes and bid adieu to our beloved hostas and daylilies. On Thursday August 1 a "For Sale" sign will appear in our front yard. These two old gardeners will move to an independent living facility nearby. It was a hard decision that we all must make someday, but it is time to pass the pruners to younger pairs of hands. Hopefully, someone will take a look, fall I love with all the hostas and cherish them as much as we did.

As I will be quite busy in the next month and may not yet have a functioning computer, I have decided to combine the August and September newsletters into one. **The final newsletter of the 2024 gardening season will arrive in your inbox on October 1.** I will see you at the next meeting to learn all about Missouri native Americans and how they used the plants that grew around them to treat all their aches and pains.

As we haven't yet moved, I better get outside and water those pots!

The foliage has been losing its freshness through the month of August, and here and there a yellow leaf shows itself like the first gray hair amidst the locks of a beauty who has seen one season too many.... September is dressing herself in showy dahlias and splendid marigolds and starry zinnias. October, the extravagant sister, has ordered an immense amount of the most gorgeous forest tapestry for her grand reception.

- Olive Wendel Holmes (1809-1894), "Autumn," The Atlantic Almanac, 1868

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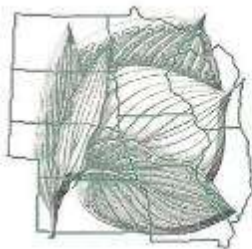
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Dues: \$10 per year, \$20 for three years
Individual or Household

Meetings held at Commerce Bank Center for Science Education (CBEC), 4651 Shaw Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63110 unless otherwise noted.

Visit our Web site: www.stlhosta.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:

Barry Ankney, AHS Membership Secretary
1104 Oxford Ct
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181

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/>