



# Shady Business

Newsletter of The Potomac Hosta Club, Inc.

Volume 29, Number 3, August 2015

[www.potomachostaclub.com](http://www.potomachostaclub.com)

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## President's Letter

Again this year the weather has not been exceptionally hot and the hostas and I have been grateful (and so have the weeds). I hope a number of you, especially in Virginia, will have your gardens ready to participate in the 2016 Garden Stroll! I was disappointed in this year's turnout. Each of us that have opened our gardens works very hard to make them ready for your visit.

It was great to see a number of you at this year's American Hosta Society 2015 Convention in Raleigh, NC. Jim and I are most appreciative for all the help at the 'Hostatality' Suite. Thank You for making it a big success.

The next event will be our Annual Fall Picnic on September 13th. We would appreciate if you could let us know if you are planning on coming and how many. The club is providing fried chicken, drinks, and plastic ware – plates /cups/napkins, etc. Please bring a side dish and/or dessert and plants to swap. If you have something that could be auctioned off that would be great. I hope some of you can come a bit early to help with setup and closing. Because of the setting near a pool, Please \*\*\*NO GLASS ANYTHING\*\*\* – Thanks.

The board will be meeting soon so if you have any thoughts on guest speakers, meeting locations, plant sales or any other ideas for next year please email or call.

*Susan*

**'Hosta Gardeners have it made in the shade.'**

# Potomac Hosta Club 2014 Annual Picnic and Plant Auction

Date: Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015

From Noon to 3:00 P.M. at the Broyhill Crest Recreation Club,  
7212 Early Street, Annandale, Virginia.

Please RSVP Susan Hedrick ([hostaclub@gmail.com](mailto:hostaclub@gmail.com)) if you plan on attending.

**Directions:** Take the Capitol Beltway/I-495 into Virginia to the Gallows Road/VA Hwy 650 South exit (Exit 51) and proceed south on Gallows Road for 1.3 miles. Turn left onto Wayne Drive and drive 0.4 miles to a right turn onto Murray Lane. On Murray Lane, drive 0.2 miles to a right turn onto Early Street and into the Broyhill Crest Recreation Club, 7212 Early Street, Annandale, Virginia.



## Welcome Aboard!

The Potomac Hosta Club would like to welcome the following new member:  
- Beth Decker, Columbia, MD

## Hosta Diseases

By Diane Plewa & Travis Cleveland

*(This article is courtesy of the Northern Illinois Hosta Society from their newsletter, Hosta Happenings, Issue 90, July 2015 and is reprinted from the 23 September 23, 2014, edition of the University of Illinois Extension, Home Yard & Garden Pest Newsletter.)*

The hosta is a popular landscaping plant, loved for its beautiful variety of foliage, and ease of cultivation. Around this time, delicate purple or

white flowers develop before frost. Below are some of the most prevalent pathogens on hosta in Illinois.

### *Foliar nematodes*

The University of Illinois plant clinic has received several hosta samples damaged by foliar nematodes (*Aphelenchoides* spp). These microscopic worms infect the above-ground parts of hostas. They are able to swim through a film of water on the leaf surface of a hosta and then enter plant tissue via natural openings or wounds. Foliar nematodes that infect hosta are able to spread to other plants in drops of splashing water or by way of gardening tools. Wet conditions throughout the summer favored their spread. Symptoms of these foliar nematodes start out as water-soaked areas within parallel veins on leaves, but later these long areas can become necrotic, dark, and maybe even tattered in appearance. To control foliar nematodes remove infected leaves, reduce overhead irrigation, and



*Hosta leaves infected with foliar nematodes and showing the common symptom of interveinal brown bands. Photo University of Illinois Plant Clinic*

sanitize garden tools. Overwintering populations of nematode can potentially be reduced by keeping mulch and plant debris away from hosta crowns.

### **Petiole Blight**

This is a devastating fungal disease caused by *Sclerotium rolfsii*. Under favorable conditions, the pathogen can rapidly take-over and defoliate an otherwise healthy hosta. It was previously named Hosta Crown Rot, but was renamed due to the fact that the pathogen attacks the petiole while the plant's crown remains unharmed.

This pathogen is particularly devastating because of its ability to survive in the soil and on the soil surface from several months to years. Survivability is attributed to the tough, mustard seed-like overwintering structures, known as sclerotia. The pathogen becomes active during warm, humid weather at which point the sclerotia germinate and tufts of white mycelium fan out over the soil surface. When the fungus comes in contact with a host, it releases oxalic acids that break-down plant cells walls and tissues. On hostas, symptoms begin as wilting and discoloration of lower leaves. In a short time the upper leaves also wilt; and close inspection shows a soft, brown rot of the base of petioles. The entire leaf soon collapses above the site of infection.

Prevention and sanitation are important for disease control. The fungus is spread by sclerotia or by mycelium growing from the sclerotia. Contaminated nursery plants and exchange between



*Left - Collapsed hosta petioles are covered in white mycelium of Sclerotium rolfsii at the base. Right - Base of infected hosta petiole with the small, round, tan to brown sclerotia of Sclerotium rolfsii. Diane Plewa photo.*

gardeners has aided long distance spread of the disease. Closely inspect plants for signs of the disease before purchasing plants or accepting plants from friends and family. If you spot the disease in your landscape, remove all of the infected plant parts, placing them directly into a bag to remove them from the garden. Be careful not to spread any of the fungal mycelium or sclerotia. Do not compost diseased plants. Remove the top several inches of soil around the plant, again being careful not to spill any as you work. Unfortunately, no effective fungicides are currently available for homeowners to use. Mulch may contribute to the overwinter survival of the pathogen. Pulling mulch back from the base of plants before winter may help to kill the fungus. There are differences in levels of susceptibility among hosta cultivars, but nothing with high levels of resistance.

### **Hosta Virus X**

Hosta virus X (HVX) is a pathogen that has plagued gardeners worldwide. As with most viruses, HVX will not kill hosta; however it can cause a number of undesirable symptoms such as: mosaics, yellowing, and necrosis on the foliage. Once a hosta is infected, this virus can lurk within infected plant sap, and can easily be spread by hands and garden tools. HVX can also persist in plants for years before symptoms develop, and any plants propagated from an infected plant will also develop the disease. No controls are available once the plant has been infected. Avoid introducing the disease by purchasing disease free plants from reputable sources. Destroy any symptomatic hostas, and

sanitize equipment before working with nearby healthy hosta plants.



*Sum and Substance hosta leaf infected with HVX and showing dark mottling symptoms. Travis Cleveland photo*

### **Leaf Spots**

Leaf spots are common to hosta. While they make plants less attractive, they rarely are considered to be serious diseases; although they can contribute to overall plant stress. There are many different fungi that cause foliar spots on hosta. Control methods for all of the hosta leaf spot diseases are similar, regardless of the fungal causal pathogen and infected area, as follows: overhead irrigation should be avoided, heavily infected leaves removed, and garden equipment sanitized. Protective fungicides can be applied before the disease infection takes place. These chemicals are especially useful for plants that were previously affected by fungal leaf spots in the past.



*Fungal leaf spots on hosta. Photo by Diane Plewa.*

### **Abiotic Problems**

Like all plants, hosta is susceptible to sunscald and drought stress. Slugs can also be major pests of hosta. Hosta plants prefer moist, well-drained soils.



*A bed of hostas stressed by sunscald and disease. Photo by Diane Plewa*

Depending on the variety, they will do well in a range of full shade to full sun (though most favor partial shade). Stressed plants tend to develop diseases more frequently than unstressed ones, so reducing stress and increasing plant vitality can be a powerful tool to prevent disease development in your garden.

### **How late is too late to Plant Hostas in the Fall?**

By Bob Solberg

*(This article is courtesy of Bob Solberg of Green Hill Farm, reprinted from the Central Illinois Hosta Society's newsletter, Great Expectations, Volume 21, Issue 6, August 2015.)*

August is a great time to plant hostas almost anywhere in the country. You can safely plant them all month in the Midwest and North and the latter half of the month in the South. My standard rule is you want to get them in the ground 4-6 weeks before the first frost. This allows them to make some new roots while the soil is still warm and then have some time to prepare for winter.

Most of us, though, have planted hostas in the ground later than that with good success. I have planted them as late as the first week of November

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# 2015 Garden Stroll – Pat Myler’s Garden



(Continued from Page 4.) without any noticeable ill effects. You do run a risk with late planting however. Hostas are completely dormant during the winter, and they will not produce new roots until after they have made new foliage in the spring. They literally sleep through the winter.

Late planted hostas may rot over the winter if 1) the ground is frozen and stays frozen shortly after they are planted, 2) they are very dry when the ground freezes, 3) the soil stays too wet because of poor winter drainage or 4) heaving occurs during cycles of the soil freezing and thawing. Snow cover or a covering of mulch will help with all these situations. Remember, blue hostas, as well as many gold hostas, with *H. sieboldiana* and *H. 'Tokudama'* parents as well as some *H. longipes* types are the most susceptible to winter kill. Miniature hostas may also completely heave out of the ground, resulting in cold damage to the crown.

So, with late hosta planting, first make sure the plants are full of water when the first hard frost hits. Then try a little mulch to protect the hosta crowns and moderate soil temperatures. (Beware! Deep mulches may entice mice and voles to make their winter homes in your hosta garden.) With a little luck from the winter weather you can probably extend your planting season another month or so, even after the first frost.

## Back To Basics: Hosta Fact Sheet

By Bob Solberg

(This article is courtesy of Bob Solberg from his Green Hill Gossip and reprinted from the Central Illinois Hosta Society's newsletter, Great Expectations, Volume 21, Issue 4, June 2015, and the Northern Illinois Hosta Society's newsletter, Hosta Happenings, Issue 90, July 2015.)

"Sometimes it is time to get back to the basics, to tell the old stories again so we can all try to share in the same view of the hosta world." Bob Solberg

**1. Hostas have lily-like flowers but are members of the agave family.** For years hostas were considered in the lily family based on the structure of their flowers. With the advent of DNA testing hostas because of their uniqueness have either been put in their own family, the *Hostaceae*, or lumped into the asparagus family, the *Asparagaceae*, in the

agave subfamily *Agavoideae*. Hostas and agaves have the same chromosome numbers. Think of them as similar plants, one adapted to moist forests and meadows and the other adapted to dryer conditions.

**2. Hostas are perennial annuals.** Hostas have an annual life cycle. They emerge in the spring, make new leaves and roots, produce flowers and seeds, and then go dormant for the winter. They have a seed-based biology, tall flowering scapes, easy for bee pollinators to find, that scatter seeds away from the mother plant. They have perennial crown tissue that stores energy over the winter and forms dormant buds to repeat the process year after year. In the care of a good gardener, hostas are immortal.

**3. Hostas are shade plants.** Some say hostas tolerate shade but I think they prefer some shade. They would like more sun, however, than most of us give them. They appreciate light but their leaves will bum in the direct sunlight of a hot summer. Morning sun is usually a great placement for hostas or areas of the garden with bright indirect lighting.

**4. Hostas are drought tolerant.** Yes, amazingly hostas will survive the most extreme drought but not without some damage to the crown resulting in smaller plants the following year. Hostas will dry rot in hot, dry summers and sometimes emerge as little tissue culture like plants in the spring. In fact, hostas love water. I do not know if you can water them too much. In fact you can grow them in a shallow stream or in a pot in a pond. In very rainy summers, their foliage might develop fungal infections but the next spring their spot free leaves will emerge bigger and better than ever.

**5. Hostas are native plants.** Hostas are native plants in Japan, China, Korea, and Russia. *H. ventricosa* has even become naturalized in some parts of the United States. There are between 20 and 40 species of hostas in the wild depending on whether you are a lumpster or a splitter but many are rarely used to produce new hosta cultivars. Here are the hosta species that really matter to horticulture and hosta collectors. *H. montana*, *H. sieboldiana*, *H. fluctuans*, and *H. nigrescens* are the parents to most large hosta hybrids. *H. sieboldiana* is the origin of almost all blue hostas. *H. plantaginea* is the origin of all fragrant-flowered hostas. *H. sieboldii* is the beginning point for hosta

variegation, although many new variegated hostas have *H. sieboldiana* ('Dorothy Benedict') as a parent. Purple pigments in the leaf petioles and scapes of hostas can be found in the Japanese species of *H. longipes*, *H. kikutii*, *H. hyopleuca*, and

*H. pycnophylla*. Red pigments, especially the ones I have isolated in the leaves of hostas, primarily come from the Korean species *H. yingeri*, *H. tsushimensis*, and *H. clausa* as well as the Japanese

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## 2015 Garden Stroll – Tito Rivera's Garden

**Tito shows you can have a robust hosta garden with multiple, well-chosen pots and plants in a townhouse back yard.**



(Continued from previous page.) species, *H. sieboldii*. Small and miniature hostas are hybridized generally from *H. venusta*, *H. nakaiana*, *H. longissima*, *H. gracillima* and *H. sieboldii*. While useful in hybridizing, *H. ventricosa* and *H. lancifolia* are traditional landscape plants useful in mass plantings, borders, and ringing trees.

**6. Hostas are huge.** Giant hostas are spectacular. There is nothing quite like seeing a garden of seven foot wide hostas, taller than your belly button. They are like skyscrapers, amazing structures that we cannot quite fathom how they came to be. We really do not know how, where, or when that tiny seedling that became ‘Sum and Substance’ first appeared on earth but it exceeded all our expectations. Now it’s the bigger the better, and ‘Empress Wu’ has become the new hosta synonymous with huge. I am impressed every summer by the giants; every garden no matter how small should have a few.

**7. Hostas are tiny.** Miniature hostas are cute. Some minis are small because they come from small parents but some are small because they do not grow well. I like the vigorous ones even if they have to be divided every once in a while to keep them in their designated space. ‘Tears of Joy’ is an upright twisted tiny leafed hosta from *H. venusta* parentage. The leaf twisting is caused by some strange mutation that has also reduced the flower petals so that the flowers appear tiny and yellow, with just the pollen on the anthers visible. Hostas of extreme sizes, large or small, are equally amazing.

**8. Hostas are low maintenance, carefree plants.** True, plant a hosta and walk away from it and it will survive on its own. If you want to maximize your hosta’s potential and your enjoyment of their company, then a little fertilizer in the spring, irrigation in dry times, and maybe a little weeding and mulching will make a big difference. Half of the fun of gardening is helping your hostas prosper.

**9. Hostas do need to be fertilized.** Many hosta gardeners tell me that they never feed their hostas. Maybe they all have deep rich soils but hostas like all plants need specific nutrients in ample supply to make their own food. For hostas, nitrogen and magnesium are the most important for producing large, high quality leaves. Try a foliar feed of liquid

fertilizer in the spring a couple of times and see if your hostas don't look happier.

**10. Hostas are virtually pest and disease free.** Hostas can be, and I do not mean in a virtual internet kind of way. If you are careful how you obtain your new hostas you can probably avoid foliar nematodes and Hosta Virus X, the two pest problems that get all the research money and bad press. That leaves slugs, sticks, and fungus, all temporary flaws on hosta leaves that will not reappear the next spring. I think it is unreasonable to want your hosta leaves to remain unblemished all summer; after all they do live in the real world.

**11. Hostas are “deer candy.”** The number one threat to Hostadom is deer. They have had an enormous effect on the growth of the popularity of hostas in the past decade. Serious hosta growers in areas when deer are too numerous need to get a fence or use repellent regularly to prevent those varmints from turning your beautiful hosta clumps into celery stalks. Hostas are evidently very nutritious to other mammals as well; voles and even the occasional crazed squirrel will eat hostas. Keep up the good fight!

**12. Hostas with blue leaves are shade lovers.** Since almost all blue hostas can be traced back to *H. sieboldiana*, a hosta that prefers a cooler spot in the garden, blue hostas are very reliable in shade. Some hybrids, like ‘Halcyon’ can, however, grow well in a good deal of sun but with some leaf damage if temperatures are extremely high.

**13. Hostas with yellow leaves are not sun lovers.** Yellow hostas, because they have less chlorophyll than green hostas, need more light to produce their food. Thus, it would make sense that they would prosper in more sun. Unfortunately, many gold hostas are children of *H. sieboldiana*, the shade lover, and cannot handle hot sun. Many gold hostas are also from *H. sieboldii* and *H. tsushimensis* and some of these are more sun tolerant, especially in the North.

**14. Hostas with fragrant flowers demand sun and water.** All fragrant-flowered hostas can be traced back to *H. plantaginea* as a parent. *H. plantaginea* grows best in a sunnier location (but not the full sun of the Walmart parking lot), with lots of water. I grow my fragrant-flowered hostas

on a deck that gets mid-day sun in pots sitting in saucers of water.

**15. Hostas grow best in rich, well drained, moist soil.** Not all of our gardens have “rich, well-drained, evenly moist soil” no matter how much soil amending we do. If not, the solution may be to grow your hostas in pots! In a container, the gardener can control the soil, light, water, and nutrition for its hostas. From Zone 7, maybe Zone 6, south, there is no winter protection needed for potted hostas, just maybe for your expensive ceramic pots.

**16. Hostas make great cut flowers.** Scapes of hosta flowers are great in flower arrangements. Cut the scape after a couple of flowers have opened, place in water, re-cutting the scape every few days, and the flowers will last for up to two weeks. Does cutting your hosta scapes induce more hosta leaves? No, the growing point of the shoot that made the leaves is now on the top of the scape making flowers. Allowing seed set however might take some energy from next year's plant so cut the scapes after they begin setting seeds, after several flowers have opened, or when the scapes become unruly, grabbing at garden visitors.

**17. Hostas can be propagated by division.** We all know that hosta clumps can be divided in half, in quarters, or even down to single divisions using a sharp Ginsu knife. I like to do this in August after the hottest weather has past so that the divisions can regrow new roots before dormancy. Others prefer to divide their hostas in early spring as they emerge but usually only in half or maybe quarters, if it a large clump. The tissue culture process is just dividing hostas in test tubes in the present of growth regulating hormones. In TC, hostas can be divided every 4-6 weeks instead of 2-3 years in the garden. It is because of tissue culture that hostas are so affordable. Think how long it would take you to amass 100 divisions of your favorite hosta seedling by garden divisions. I bet you would have to charge a lot for them.

**18. Hosta tetraploids are improved hostas.** Hostas that are chemically converted from their normal two sets of chromosomes to double that number (4 sets) have their advantages and disadvantages. Converted tetraploids have shorter scapes, larger flowers, thicker leaves on more

compact plants, and maybe richer colors. Unfortunately, they are smaller plants generally, except for white-centered forms, have shorter roots and grow more slowly. There is some good and some not so good. Someday, because of their greater genetic variability tetraploid hybrids may produce great advances in hosta hybridizing but it looks to be a slow process.

**19. Hostas grow best north of I-80.** I think they do. The combination of cooler summers with lower light intensity, longer days, and a shorter growing season allows hostas to be grown in more sun without heat stress. The more tropical *H plantaginea* and its children, however, may actually grow better in the South if given ample water and light.

**20. Hostas will grow in Florida.** Not all hostas need a cold dormancy to flourish. Many hostas will grow well in the panhandle of northern Florida but ‘So Sweet’ is almost evergreen in Orlando and further south. Hostas can be grown in Los Angeles also, but all do better in pots than in the ground.

**21. Hostas grow larger year after year.** All hostas have a maximum size based on their genetic composition but hosta clumps do tend to increase in the number of shoots year after year. After maybe a decade some hostas will only produce shoots from the edge of the crown, leaving a “fairy ring”. Some older hosta clumps start to wander around the garden, opening up, looking more like a forest than a tree. I do think there are limits to growth, but they are dependent on changes in the garden environment and the enthusiasm of the gardener.

**22. Hostas have interesting names.** All horticultural plants have “fancy” names given by their originators. There are over 8,000 hostas with names that we have recorded and really many more in hybridizer's gardens across Hostadom. I do not know if any other plant has such interesting and entertaining names, so much so that many hostas are purchased for the name alone. There are song names, food names, names of friends, and somewhat risqué names. Great names make for great hostas. Just look at the “mouse mania” that the name ‘Blue Mouse Ears’ has generated.

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# 2015 Garden Stroll – Taffy Turner’s Garden



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**23. Hostas have interesting flowers.** Hostas are not grown for their flowers, but some should be. There are of course fragrant flowers that fill our August evenings in the garden with delight. There are a few double flowers, too, more curiosities for me than anything else. Now hostas are beginning to have flowers with different colored stripes, dark purple, red, and black. Yellow and blue flowers have been reported too. Soon you may be buying hostas for their unusual flowers as well as the pretty foliage, believe it or not.

**24. Hosta hybridizing is fun and easy.** It can be, but it can be difficult and frustrating, too. Hosta seeds are easy to germinate and grow into nice little plants. Some hostas set seed easily, but usually the ones you really want to set are obstinate. If you want to give hosta hybridizing a try, cross a blue hosta with a yellow hosta. The result will be green, blue and yellow seedlings. Streaked hostas make good pod parents, yielding variegated prodigy. You can even sow the seeds in the garden in the fall and they will jump out of the ground in the spring. Give it a try, it really is fun.

**25. Hostas are red, too.** The quest is on for red hostas. We now have hostas with completely red or purple petioles and scapes. There are hostas with purple up the midrib into the middle of the leaf and even a little red on the leaf margin. The ultimate goal is to have hostas with red leaves that stay red. They are coming, I can't wait.

**26. Hosta collecting is addicting.** If you are reading this little newspaper, then you are either enjoying the hosta high, trying to collect in moderation, or have quit this week for the umpteenth time. Hosta collecting creates a positive feeling in a world of negativity. It is a good thing. Just stay positive and don't spend all the grocery money.

**27. Hostas come with friends.** Hostas have been correctly called the "Friendship Plant." Some of the best friends that I have found their way to me because of our mutual interest in hostas. Some I have pursued and some have chosen me, but with all, our relationship goes much farther than just the

plant. It may be because we met under the therapeutic effect of hostas in a shady garden.

**28. Hostas are our friends.** I believe there is a spiritual relationship between hostas and humans. We really do love them in some magical way. We share our lives with them, the joys of spring, the stress of summer, the sadness of autumn, and the hope-filled dreams of winter. They are friends that give back more than they take. They make us feel good about ourselves.

**29. Hostas emerge magically in the spring.** No one can argue that this is the number one reason we grow hostas. For three or four weeks in the spring, hostas entrance us. We get caught up in the spirit of spring renewal, freshness and purity, resurrection. Hostas more than any plant I know relish in this explosion of rebirth. Picture a seven foot clump of 'Sum and Substance' expanding rapidly enough to make a full clump from bare soil in 2-3 weeks. You can almost watch it grow. And when those huge leaves begin to unfurl, goose bumps will run up and down your spine.

In spring we all do the hosta dance, running to the garden two, three or more times a day, looking for new shoots. We count the eyes and calculate the profit. We help the minis emerge by removing a leaf or that extra mulch we gave them as a blanket for winter. We suffer when a twig pokes a hole in a perfect leaf. We wander out into the garden and are lost for hours, transported to hosta heaven.

Maybe we wish that we could be like hostas and have a fresh start every year. On New Year's Eve we like to think we have that magical power reserved for immortals, but by February we realize that we all carry the past into the future. Then comes March and April and we do the hosta dance and it is another year of hope in the garden. Last summer seems years away. This is why we grow hostas, first to share their joy and their confidence in the future and second to share it with each other.

**30. Hostas are supposed to be fun!!!** We live in a critical world. We see the glass half empty more than half full. We see the slug holes in our hostas and not the perfect leaves. We abandon old favorites for the newest hosta sport that appears on-line. We are uncomfortable in a world that moves

too fast. All time slows down in the shade garden when we look and listen to what the hostas have to say. Life, yes, is filled with disappointments but hope springs eternal. Happiness is really contentment, accepting our circumstances. The hostas know this better than we do as they sit patiently and peacefully in the shade. Hostas are supposed to be fun, hosta folks, too.

## Mottled Hostas: Are They Sick or Super?

By David Teager, Ph.D

*(This article is reprinted courtesy of the Delaware Valley Hosta Society's Newsletter, Volume 21, Number 1, Spring 2015 edition.)*

Sometime in the time of Y2K, hosta-centered internet chat forums and email chains began buzzing with commentary on the first pictures of a new kind of hosta, exemplified by *H.* 'Leopard Frog' (G. R. Goodwin, 2000, a "sport" of 'Little Aurora') and 'Eternal Father' (J. Willets, 1999, a "sport" of 'Sun Power'). These hostas weren't just streaky (like the coveted streaked breeding hostas) or misty (like the delicious 'Spilt Milk'); they were downright splotchy, like an aucuba leaf on a hosta! The hosta world was divided: were these new hostas something we wanted in our gardens? It is difficult to assess the division in hindsight, but it seemed that there were many people at the time who did.



"Variegation" on *H.* 'Leopard Frog'

Soon, of course, more such "sports" appeared, and we know the rest of the sad story. These intriguing leaves were not normal, but were showing the symptoms of a new virus, later labeled as Hosta Virus X (HVX). And while some plant viruses are relatively benign, HVX was virulent, easily transferred to other cultivars by transfer of sap

between wounded leaves or roots (as could happen in field harvesting or pruning). *H.* 'Sum and Substance', at the time taking the gardening world by storm, was sadly one of those most frequently infected.

Still, to some this mottled patterning was desirable (leaving aside those who permit HVX in their gardens because they "like" the look). Hosta people, though, are clever folk. Just as modern breeders of tulips eventually found breeding lines leading to "flame" patterned blooms – where the coveted broken colors of the tulipomania craze were caused by a mosaic virus – perhaps the productive breeders and sport spotters of the hosta world would discover or develop non-virused hostas with the desired coloration.

In the fall of 2014 and winter of 2015, a minor buzz arose with the upload of a picture to the AHS Facebook page of *H.* 'Kiwi Forest' (B. Sligh, 1999). Rick Goodenough's picture (picture below) shows a well-grown Tokudama-type plant in springtime; the mottling is said to fade over the season to result in an all-green, somewhat glaucous, plant. From ten feet away in springtime, though, it would be difficult not to see the hosta and think: what's up with that! Indeed, some commenters thought "sick," while others thought "super" and raised the question where they could get it or others like it.



*H.* 'Kiwi Forest'

An internet investigation shows that 'Kiwi Forest' belongs to a small group of hostas listed on Don Rawson's "The Hosta Lists" website under "Mottled-leaved Hostas." (Do note that some on this list are likely infected with HVX.) Rick later uploaded a picture of 'Wolcott' (D. Stone/Piedmont

Gardens, 1982), also on the Rawson list: a Sieboldiana-type seedling with similar coloration to ‘Kiwi Forest’, again turning all-green by summer. Most, but not all, of the mottled hostas exhibit the same color change. This is a key difference from HVX-infected plants, which will show the same broken coloration all year long, as well as a distinctive “collapsed tissue” effect in affected regions.

Notice that while Barry Sligh’s ‘Kiwi Forest’ was registered in the beginning of the HVX era (and Barry later registered some suspect infected plants with this coloration, such as ‘Kiwi Dreadlocks’), ‘Wolcott’ has been around even longer (picture below). Looking deeper into Don Rawson’s list of mottled hostas (immediately following this article), one sees that quite a number of these plants have been around a long time. These plants remain rare, likely because this variegation pattern is not well-expressed in the tissue culture propagation process. Rare, but not necessarily expensive: the box shows prices for listed cultivars in Steven Greene’s *Hosta Finder* (2015).



H. ‘Wolcott’

As well, based on reviewing the immensely helpful [www.MyHostas.be](http://www.MyHostas.be) database, it would seem that these truly mottled hostas do not readily pass on this trait to their seedlings. Only ‘Cynthia’ seems to have produced any mottled progeny at all, with Ron Lysne finding ‘Alliteration’ in a back-cross of ‘Cynthia’ x [‘Cynthia’ x ‘Piedmont Gold’]. This seems to leave the breeder looking for an exceptionally rare mutation, and the buyer desirous of such hostas with few choices, limited to originator’s stock divisions.

This (in the author’s opinion) is not a bad thing for the hosta world. For fifteen years we have been battling HVX, and educating growers and buyers about the disease is a significant part of that battle. If one of the mottled hostas successfully yielded to tissue culture propagation, these might trickle down from the specialty nursery catalogs to the regional or local garden centers, those same centers where we have worked so hard to purge stock of virus-infected ‘Blue Cadet’, ‘Sum and Substance’, et al., which look-one cannot deny-no less interesting than that well-grown ‘Wolcott’. Many of us have developed a conditioned response to this mottled look, and it isn’t a favorable one. Others, with no less (and perhaps more) concern for the health of their garden plants, can overcome this response and find a place for this variant variegation in their gardens.

And so the mottled hosta remains a curiosity. You may question the sanity of any gardener who chooses to grow a hosta that looks, well, sick (to you). Or you may think this is super, and wish to have such an unusual hosta in your collection, given the questions and opinions that garden visitors are likely to offer. Or else you fall somewhere in-between: informed but neither repulsed nor intrigued. Beauty is, indeed, in the eye of the beholder. By David Teager, Ph.D.; reprinted from the Delaware Valley Hosta Society Newsletter, spring 2015 issue

#### Mottled-leaved Hostas

They have a blotched (or splotted) spotting of the leafblade [Don Rawson, [www.hostalists.org](http://www.hostalists.org), accessed March 2015].

HF indicates prices from *Hosta Finder*, 21st Edition, 2015

HL indicates pictures at Hosta Library, [www.hostalibrary.org](http://www.hostalibrary.org).

- ‘Alliteration’ (R. Lysne/Northern Grown Perennials, NR, introduced ca. 2012) pic at <http://mwt.net/~ngp/hostaintros.htm>, \$75
- ‘Blue Freckles’ (B. Martin, 2004) likely HVX infected ‘Birchwood Parky’s Gold’
- ‘Cynthia’ (C. Thompkins, 1984) mottled/streaked breeder, parentage unknown (montana?) viridescent, great HL pics. Mottled seedling ‘Alliteration’ and perhaps ‘Laella’. HF \$10-15.

- ‘Doctor Reath’ (D. Reath/Ruh, 1997) Sieboldiana-type sport, probably = ‘Filagree’ below
- ‘Filagree’ (2009 registration but older, D. Reath) HF \$35-90.
- ‘Filagree Sister’ (actually a daughter, 2009 registration but older than that) HF \$60.
- ‘Flecked Fantasy’ (L. Powell, NR) virus-suspect ‘Golden Sunburst’ sport
- ‘Freckles’ (Viette/Summers/AHS, 2009 but older) Fortunei-type? Not seeing “green with yellow blotches” (per registration) on HL pic. HF \$10.
- ‘Fury of Flame’ (Zilis/Q&Z Nursery, 1985) *H. ventricosa* ‘Aureomaculata’ seedling with “furious” variegation (heavily, but more classically, streaked rather than mottled)
- ‘Kiwi Forest’ (B. Sligh, 1999) see discussion. HF \$20-22.
- ‘Knaves Green’ (R&M Ford, NR) Unknown origin. Streaked/mottled.
- ‘Laella’ (C. Thompkins, NR) sibling or daughter of ‘Cynthia’
- ‘Little Cyn’ (R. Duback, 1998) looks like ‘Cynthia’ but registered as parentage unknown.
- ‘Pamela Ann’ (Bentley Gardens, NR) likely HVX-infected ‘Birchwood Parky’s Gold’ or similar
- ‘Spit and Spat’ (NR, no attribution) one HL pic by Vik Serafin, ‘Sun Power’-type?
- ‘Wolcott’ (D. Stone/Piedmont Gardens, 1982) see discussion. HF \$20-25.
- ‘Xanadu Paisley’ (V&B Skaggs, 2000) ‘August Moon’ sport that rarely does progress to ‘Abiqua Moonbeam’. Mottling is stable all season. Numerous HL pics. HF \$70-90.

## **H. ‘Sun Power’ - Still a Great Hosta**

by Harold McDonell

*(This article is courtesy of the Georgia Hosta Society from their newsletter, Georgia Notes, Volume 31, Number 3, August 2015.)*

At the AHS National Convention in Raleigh, NC this summer, I was bowled over at the sight of three spectacular clumps of *Hosta* ‘Sun Power’ growing in the garden of Kathleen and Walt Thompson. It

reminded me that all hostas need not be the newest of the new to be the best.

*H.* ‘Sun Power’ was registered by Paul Aden in 1986 and is likely an origination of Florence Shaw. In its almost thirty years of existence, it has proven to be one of the finest and most spectacular gold hostas ever created. It is a vigorous grower throughout the country and will quickly make a large clump measuring about two feet tall and over four feet wide. As its name implies, it can take a lot of direct sunlight, even here in the south. Indeed, it prefers at least some time in the sun in order to develop its best glowing gold color.

When selecting hostas for our gardens, we often look for the latest and greatest. However, there are many oldies like ‘Sun Power’ which should be a part of every hosta collection. As space permits, I hope to highlight other outstanding older hostas in future newsletters. Let me know if you have some suggestions.



*H. ‘Sun Power’ - Kathleen and Walt Thompson Garden, Raleigh, North Carolina; Photo by T. Hilt*

## **2016 American Hosta Society Convention: “Gateway to the Gardens”**

Next year’s AHS convention will be held in St. Louis from June 13<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup>, hosted by the St. Louis Hosta Society. The society is actively engaged in convention preparations and items, such as the schedule, hotel and meal and some of the major

arrangements, and the tour gardens, have been selected. Much of this information should be available later in the year on the American Hosta Society's website at: [www.hosta.org](http://www.hosta.org).



**Club Publicity:** With regard to publicity, we are asking all the PHC officers and board members to do what we can to ensure that articles or notes about the Club are inserted in local news outlets, homeowners' associations newsletters, bulletin boards and the like. We also need the Club's membership to help us with this effort. If you know of an outlet for publicity for the Club, we will provide a note or article for inclusion. For assistance with this, you can contact Susan Hedrick

at [hostaclub@gmail.com](mailto:hostaclub@gmail.com) or Tom Hilt at [tandjhilt@verizon.net](mailto:tandjhilt@verizon.net).

### Membership Dues:

The current dues for 1 year/3 years are:

Households	\$10/\$25
Senior Households (65+):	\$5 Annually
Garden Clubs, Plant Societies:	\$15/\$40

### Volunteers

**This note has finally become a permanent feature in the newsletter and, unfortunately, I have not been able to make it go away.** The club needs volunteers for the many activities we are involved in, so as a member, that means you! As summer fades, the Club will be entering our "dormant" period, but like your hostas, we'll come blooming out in the spring with a new list of hosta-related events that should command your attention – and hopefully, your help. We'll be looking for you! For questions, you can always contact Susan Hedrick on 703-866-2211 or at: [hostaclub@gmail.com](mailto:hostaclub@gmail.com) or Tom Hilt on 202-546-4199 or at: [tandjhilt@verizon.net](mailto:tandjhilt@verizon.net).

### Upcoming Events For 2015

-- **Annual Picnic and Plant Auction:** *Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, from noon to 3:00 PM*, at the **Broyhill Crest Recreation Club**, 7212 Early Street, Annandale, VA (see Page 2 above for details and map). Please RSVP Susan Hedrick ([hostaclub@gmail.com](mailto:hostaclub@gmail.com)) if you plan on attending and tell her how many will be coming.

-- **2015 Fall Hosta and Garden Forum:** *Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup>*, at Edinboro University, Edinboro, PA. Sponsored by the Daffodil & Hosta Society of Western Pennsylvania and the Western New York Hosta Society, talks will be given, among others, by Bob Solberg and Rob Mortko. There is also a Friday night dinner and program; for details, see their website at: [www.wnyhosta.com](http://www.wnyhosta.com)



## 2015 Fall Picnic and Hosta Auction Edition