



The spring meeting is just around the corner!



Things to bring:

- Plants for the auction
- Gardening friends
- \$10 annual dues

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

One of the hottest hostas right now is H. 'Empress Wu', a huge green hosta and an open pollinated seedling of H. 'Big John'. The only thing it has going for it is large leaves, a humongous mound, and a long bloom time, yet I must have it. Large tropical leaves and six foot clumps get hosta lovers every time. The first time I saw a clump of H. 'Sum and Substance' is what set my hosta journey in motion, and at that point, nothing impressed me more than a monster hosta. My grandma had one she called 'Big Blue', it was actually a form of H. 'Elegans' and it wasn't very blue, but it introduced me to a nook in the hosta world from which I would soon buy plants like H. 'Azure Snow' and H. 'Blue Mammoth'.

Large and really blue is incredible, yet really, really blue, or bluer than what's already out there is hard to find, and is therefore a terrific breeding goal. Some of the bluest hostas I know of (at least here in the south) are H. 'Deane's Dream' ('Blue Arrow' x 'Sea Fire'), H. 'Prairie Sky' ((seedling of H. rupifraga x 'Maruba Iwa') x 'Blue Jay'), and H. 'Sherbourne Swift' ('Tardiflora' x H. sieboldiana 'Elegans'). Probably the bluest is H. 'Powderpuff' ('Halcyon' x 'Blue Dimples'), a smaller hosta that, when you compare it's leaves to other blues, usually wins the contest. It's really a great gauge for where your seedling is on the blue scale. Trying to get a blue that holds up to our heat and blooms later (which keeps the plant fresher, longer), should definitely be a part of our breeding goals.

What are your favorite blues? My favorite for the last couple years has been H. 'Deane's Dream'. It has a unique blue color, almost turquoise, with light purple petioles. It's flowers are lavender with dark stripes in the petals, straight scapes, and it blooms above the foliage in good proportion. I've crossed onto H. 'Deane's Dream' for the last couple years, and this produced a few interesting seedlings. This past season I crossed it's pollen onto H. 'Azure Snow' and the results have been exciting. Bob wrote that "Hostas, can be hybridized to be bluer than their parents" ("Blue Hostas, Is beauty only skin deep?" Green Hill Gossip, March '07). As you may have noticed, all of my favorite blues are bluer than their parents (with the possible exception of H. 'Blue Jay', at least one I saw in Doug Beilstein's Ohio garden a couple years ago!). Most are from older hostas like tardianas, so we can get bluer now! Let's use newer hybrids and work on better blues as a club, who knows what could happen.

Everyone who came to the winter meeting received open pollinated H. 'World Cup' seedlings. I hope they are growing well. Bring a few to the May meeting to show off. Bob will share what's on his mind, he and I will show some of our seedlings, and we'll have our annual plant auction. You'll find the details for our spring meeting later in this newsletter. Or, visit the Web site for full details. (www.CarolinaHosta.org).

- Simpson Eason

HOSTAS IN THE MOUNTAINS PART TWO

The North Carolina Hosta Society is announcing its second annual 'Hostas in the Mountains' to be held at Rux Gardens in beautiful Waynesville, North Carolina. The nursery is open for the event on Saturday, July 11, 2009, from 9-5. There will be free hotdogs, chips, cookies and drinks from 10-4. Bob Solberg will speak on 'Landscapes of Hostas' at 11:00 AM, 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM. Flo Chaffin will speak at 2:00 PM about conifers. Like last year, there will be plenty of hostas, conifers and other fun garden plants available for purchase.

Please contact Trish Rux at 828-456-4621 or ruxgardens@gmail.com to reserve your spot at the lectures you would like to attend. She can also give you information about hotels in the area if you want to make a whole weekend out of it. Remember, the lectures and food are free and don't forget to visit other fine gardens and attractions the area has to offer.

For more information call Trish Rux at 828-456-4621 or Bob Solberg at 919-309-0649. Hope to see you there!!

Hostas are shade plants. Hostas like sun. There is a raging controversy in hostadom, and I must admit that I frequently flip-flop from side to side. Often the focus is on garden location rather than what hostas need to grow best. From my point of view, hostas grow best in a nursery not a garden anyway!

The reality is that hostas like light but do not perform well in hot sun. Like many forest understory trees, like dogwoods and redbuds, hostas in nature are shade plants but in a garden setting with extra care, they flourish in much more sunny locations. Too much of a good thing however, will result in leaves with sun scorched surfaces and burned margins.

So how do you determine how much light is the right amount of light? Well, where do you live? Yes, latitude matters. While day length in summer is longer in the Northern latitudes, the light intensity never approaches that in the sunny South. Less intensity means "cooler" light. If you live in Washington state, Minnesota, Michigan, New York or Massachusetts, hostas can be happy in almost full sun. If you live in the South or even parts of the Midwest, afternoon sun may prove too hot for them. In addition, leaf temperature is determined more by afternoon high temperatures than light intensity. Air temperatures over 95 degrees and direct sunlight will burn hosta leaves in 30 minutes or less. Temperatures over 100 degrees can cause hosta leaves to "cook" and you can even smell them fry!

In the garden it is the angle of the sun that is important. South-facing slopes capture much more sun than north-facing slopes because a south slope is almost perpendicular to the sun's rays. North slopes are parallel to the sun's rays and are bathed in cool light while south slopes are often heat sinks. Morning light is cool light mostly because of high humidity and cool air temperatures. Afternoon sun can often be too intense.

Light may cause the leaves to heat up but it is desiccation that causes the damage. Like I have said before, hostas are plant balloons filled with water. When the leaf temperatures reach a certain point, they desiccate, they burn and the damage is permanent. Desiccation in cooler conditions will just result in reversible wilting but the combination of lack of water and too much heat results in burned leaf margins or scorching of leaf surfaces.

It's obvious then that if you grow your hostas in more light, and heat, then you must supply them with more water to help prevent desiccation. If you are going to give your hostas more light and more water, you must give them more fertilizer too. Hostas can photosynthesize at a high rate with more light if enough water and nutrients are also supplied. Nurseries generally grow their hostas in "too much" light but supply "too much" water and fertilizer also so that the rate of growth is increased.

Increased amounts of light will change the shape and form of any hosta. Plant the same hosta in both 2 hours and 4 hours of direct sunlight. The latter will have more leaves, but they will be smaller and more narrow. It will produce more divisions but the clump will be shorter and more compact. It may bloom more consistently. The "sunny" hosta may appear more "juvenile" and produce more flushes of leaves in a crowded clump while the "shady" hosta may produce those huge "mature", rounded leaves on long petioles that win leaf shows.

This may be a good time to talk about the perfectly grown hosta. Every hosta we grow has its own personality, its own habits. Like our children we saddle each of them with our own expectations and set our goals for their future. We expect more from some than for others, especially the ones we paid a handsome sum for. In leaf show we envision the perfect leaf for each cultivar. In the garden it is the entire clump we envision. It is the job of the gardener, like a good parent, to create the right environment so that our hostas will succeed and meet our goals.

Site selection, how much light, is determined on what we want the plant to look like. In high light, hostas will form dense shrub like mounds. Their leaves will narrow and extenuate every ruffle and pucker. They will put on a wonderful show of flowers. In more shade however the leaves will expand to their fullest and the petioles will stretch. Clumps will become more upright and elegant, exhibiting each leaf individually. Flowers may not come at all, a blessing to gardeners that remove them as soon as they appear. In sun or shade they make look like different hostas to the untrained eye, each perfection to its caretaker's eye.

But wait, it is never that easy. All hostas do not have the same sensitivities to light. Some enjoy some hot sun while others scorch and burn. Not all hostas have the same heat tolerance or fondness for sun bathing. Even though hostas are becoming more and more complex genetically with each new generation of seedlings hybridized, there are some generalizations that seem to still work. Hosta children of *H. plantaginea* generally enjoy heat. In fact in some parts of the North, and especially the United Kingdom, fragrant flowered hostas underachieve. While they do very well in heat and humidity they do require ample rains in August to bloom well. They are great hostas for the South especially coastal regions.

Blue hostas are thought to be shade hostas. *H. sieboldiana* and 'Tokudama', the source of the white wax that creates the blue color, both like cool moist sites. Some morning sun in the South, more light way up North. Blue hosta will scorch, that is, the upper surface of the leaf will become yellow or even brown where leaf temperatures have gotten too high because of hot direct sunlight. It is the white wax that is supposed to reflect that heat but turn up the heat too much and the wax melts and the leaf burns.

Ironically, many gardeners like to grow their blue hostas in as much light as they dare because the increased light allows increased photosynthesis and then increased wax production. Extra wax usually means bluer hostas and if the extra light increases juvenility then the increased flushes of leaves will make the hosta bluer longer.

Variegated hostas have their own set of problems. White tissue tends to desiccate faster than green tissue. White margins burn easily and white centers melt away. White centered hostas that need more cool light to grow well because of their lack of chlorophyll, are much more successful in the North than in the hotter South. Wide-margined tetraploid hostas ironically also need more cool light because of their slower growth rate and often dwindle away in shady gardens.

We can talk about light all day long but in reality the only thing we can adjust is the amount of shade. In most gardens shade comes from structures and trees. Structures generally give a consistent deep shade. This is good because it tends to be very cool shade but bade because it often too low light. Short of a bulldozer little can be done to adjust this type of shade so we just work around it. The rules are simple. No hostas on the south side, lots of hostas on the north side. The east side, morning is probably okay but the baking west side may be the most dangerous.

Trees are more complicated. First, they vary from species to species in the amount of light that they allow to pass through. Pines allow filtered light constantly, beech trees provide dark, heavy shade. Secondly, the sun dances among the trees as it journeys across the sky. Tree shadows move as the sun moves. Hopefully, this provides periods of cool shade and periods of cool sun. Beware, in spring these patterns do not matter nearly as much as they do in July. Finally, trees rob your hostas of water. Shade can often be cool but dry. While wilting is not as permanent as burning, it is equally hard on your hostas and can lead to whole host of other problems. I will save that for another time.

So finally, what is the ideal amount of light for your hostas? Imagine that your garden is an open field and a huge piece of shade cloth will be the only thing between your hostas and the afternoon sun. Hostas ideally want consistent light but somewhat reduced from what comes straight from the sun. Generally, I would suggest 30% shade cloth north of Interstate 80, 50% between I-80 and the Mason Dixon Line, and 70% in the South. Now Adjust for elevation, slope orientation, type of trees, and extreme summer high temperatures. Factor in how you want your hosta leaves clumps to look and there you have it. If you could create a computer program that could solve this equation, I am sure you could sell quite a few.

MEETING MINUTES: MAY 18, 2008

Everyone enjoyed browsing and buying fully loaded pots of hostas and unusual azaleas from the nursery and we all indulged in a delicious buffet lunch in the cool of the shade with good friends. Many members enjoyed Mr. Johnson's 2-acre garden in downtown Lillington prior to the meeting. His 63-year-old garden features formal gardens, cottage gardens, many hostas, a mature canopy of trees, and natural elements. Simpson Eason, our new president, welcomed us and gave us a brief hosta biography.

Our guest speaker was Rob Slonka, a Harnett County Master Gardener volunteer and a member of the NC Cooperative Extension Service. He talked about fire ants, a pest that has no natural enemy here. His talk included ways to apply poison, how to treat bites with Benadryl, and not to use home remedies to battle fire ants.

Bob Solberg gave an interesting hybridizing talk on "Turning Green to Gold". He discussed how to do line breeding to intensify certain traits (like staying power with yellow and intensifying red petioles). He also said that 2-generation crosses are all you want to make, in order not to push the genes. Early bloomers set best, as it is often too hot in mid-summer. Collect your seeds in the fall. And good luck finding the best seedling out of 800!!

Simpson Eason then handled a brief business meeting, reminding members to get caught up on dues, now a flat \$10 fee per household. Members will receive a new "Hosta Adventure" growing guide with renewal of membership. Members were reminded of the need for a vice-president in the club. No volunteers at this time. Angie Lavendar is still looking for photos for our Web site. Please e-mail her with any you might have of your gardens. A memorial to Randolph Community College was made in memory of Jean Henderson in the amount of \$200. A memorial for Valerie Hall will be made to her county library in the sum of \$200 worth of hosta books.

Bob Solberg reminded us of the "Hosta Weekend in the Mountains" that will be held at Rux Gardens in Waynesville, NC with help from Green Hill Farm on June 21-22. Our society is helping to sponsor this event. It will feature garden lectures by Bob Solberg, Trish and Greg Rux, and Tom Goforth. The guest speaker will cost \$200. Bill Minard moved that our society pay the guest speaker fee. Peggy Hudson seconded this motion. The motion passed.

Katherine Minard gave a treasury report. Our current balance is \$5,535.00. Our club hosta is a small hosta called, 'Coconut Custard' and costs \$20 to members. Future meetings were discussed. Nancy & Bob Solberg will host the August 2008 meeting at their home. Barbara Cox will host the May 2009 meeting. We have 2 new members and 16 total people present at this meeting. Bob Solberg held our auction and the meeting ended.

Respectfully submitted, Willa Sackfield, secretary



We're on the Web

www.CarolinaHosta.org

Please expedite.
Time sensitive material enclosed.

Hope to see you at the spring meeting in Julian May 17th!

SPRING MEETING DETAILS

Date:	Location:
Sunday, May 17, 2009, 2:00 PM	Plant Logic Nursery & Gardens
Host: Barbara Cox	1644 Hwy. 62E, Julian, NC 27283

DIRECTIONS

FROM GREENSBORO: Hwy 421 S, exit on Hwy 62. Right on Hwy 62. 3rd drive on the left.

FROM CARY/APEX: Hwy 64 W to Hwy 421 N, exit on Hwy 62 toward Burlington/High Point. 3rd drive on the left.

FROM CHAPEL HILL: US 15/501 to Hwy 64 W to Hwy 421 N, exit on Hwy 62 toward Burlington/High Point. 3rd drive on the left.

Barbara Cox welcomes our group to the Family Farm in Julian, NC, the birthplace of Plant Logic Nursery & Gardens. The nursery was started as a hobby in 1989 with a few trays of ivies, hostas, and a dream to retire soon and follow her passion for plants. Through the years, she acquired daylilies, sedums, more hostas, and other various perennials.

Three years ago, she started a 'whimsy' garden with very little formality in mind. The garden presents a work in progress, and will continue to do so until she can no longer hold a hoe.

To quote John F. Kenyon: **"Gardening gives me fun and health and knowledge. It gives me laughter and color. It gives me pictures of almost incredible beauty."**

MEETING MINUTES: AUGUST 17, 2008

Everyone enjoyed walking through the beautiful sloped shade gardens at the Solberg home. The gardens impressed us with unusual perennials, beautiful hostas, and intriguing garden art. Everyone was encouraged to try their hand at growing out seedlings. Each member received an envelope of seeds to grow their own hostas. Bob spoke about the differences between tetraploids and diploids. This talk included the advantages and disadvantages of both and how to tell the difference between them.

Members agreed that they wanted to have a winter potluck again. It was agreed to that it should be held centrally in the state. Audrey Wood expressed some interest post meeting in hosting it in Randleman, NC. Everyone was told to bring their hosta seedlings to the meeting to compare their 'babies'.

In May 2009, Barbara Cox will host the meeting. The August meeting is open at this time. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. Following the meeting was the annual plant swap and delicious refreshments. We had 25 members present for this meeting. Minutes for this meeting were taken from notes that Katherine Minard made at the meeting.

Respectfully submitted, Willa Dodson Sackfield, Secretary