

North Carolina Hosta Society

JANUARY 2010



The winter meeting is just around the corner!



Things to bring:

- Pot luck dish and/or dessert
- Gardening friends
- \$10 annual dues
- Seedlings for show & tell

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

By the time fall rolls around, I've usually grown tired of garden chores, and I just want to enjoy the sights and smells of my plants, with little maintenance. Most people don't mind the declining hostas and perennials mixed in with drifts of fallen leaves. Many plants draw your attention away with eye popping color (like the berries on 'hearts a bustin' (*Euonymus americanus*), next to wild ageratum (*Eupatorium coelestinum*), beautiful aromas (like *Osmanthus fortunei* and *Eleagnus pungens*) or curious flowers (like the toad lilies *Tricyrtis hirta*, *T. formosana*, or *T. macrantha*). A lot of hostas still look fantastic in fall, like 'Tongue Twister' and 'Corkscrew', which blooms almost into November. Depending on where you site the hostas, many can look great well into October. Of course, the biggest garden chores for me occur when the many trees on my lot drop their leaves, and the majority of perennials go dormant and need to be cut back, but there is one chore I always look forward to. I've found that collecting seed from crosses I made earlier in the year can bring back the excitement of spring. I record my crosses in a book and by fall I've forgotten some of June and July's crosses. Imagining plants that might result from the crosses is like seeing a plant in person that you formally had only seen in books, it's awesome. I tend to cross one plant onto one other, or at least one plant per scape. Some people do multiple crosses per scape and I may do two or three, but the confusion, record keeping, tagging with string, labels, etc. can get exhausting. I say, if it stops being fun in the garden, stop doing it! Winter is another growing season, for your seedlings, and in it is all the joy, sorrow, and contentment you get from the 'real' growing season. Bring your seedlings when we gather in January. Bob and I will have some to look at and maybe to share!

- Simpson Eason

HOSTAS IN THE MOUNTAINS/DIXIE REGIONAL July 15-18, 2010

The beautiful Great Smokey Mountains will make a wonderful backdrop for our annual weekend of hosta fun. Waynesville is located in western North Carolina, about 30 miles from Asheville. The North Carolina Hosta Society will be our host for an expanded 4-day event, which will include a lecture and tour through the Tissue Culture Lab at nearby Haywood Community College, nationally-recognized guest speakers, garden tours and of course our Fabulous Auction and Plant Sale with vendors from across the Southeast!

The festivities start on Thursday evening, July 15th. The plans are still being made, but we do know that the venue will be The Waynesville Inn Golf Resort and Spa (formerly the Waynesville Country Club), which features a 4-star, 27-hole golf course for those non-hosta loving spouses. The Inn has been recently renovated.

The area features lots of attractions, including the nearby Biltmore House and Gardens, Cherokee Indian Reservation and Harrah's Casino, and wildlife adventures galore. The Blue Ridge Parkway is also celebrating it's 75th Anniversary and there may be festivities associated with that, as well. More info will be available in the spring. In the meantime, if you need more info, have suggestions or wish to help, please contact either Trish Rux at ruxgardens@gmail.com or Bob Solberg at greenhill@mindspring.com.

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

Reprinted from *The Green Hill Gossip Jr.* November 2006 with permission

I am proud to consider myself a hosta person. When I hang out with other plant people, I am frequently asked, "You are the hosta man, aren't you?" I am generally pleased to admit to that. Nancy is more reluctant. She has a passion for a wide variety of plants, even if that passion only lasts a year or two. She collects or has collected many different plants.

I have noticed over the years that hosta people are foliage people. Many plant collectors collect flowers. In fact, many use that word, "flowers" as synonymous with plant. Hosta folks would never call a hosta one of their flowers, we live for leaves. Think of the societies, daylily, peony, iris, daffodil, orchid, they are all flower clubs. They have flower shows, we have leaf shows. Even the rock garden society is really much more about flowers than foliage.

As a rambling aside, there has been talk recently of having a judging system for hosta flowers so that they could be entered in a Hosta Show. Hosta flowers are surely of sufficient variety and interest that they should be displayed. There are several hosta hybridizers selecting for flowers first and foliage second. There may even be hosta folks willing to grow a hosta with non-descript foliage if it has spectacular flowers.

On the negative side, few hosta collectors buy their hostas when they are in bloom. The buying frenzy usually starts to wane about the time the first scapes begin to appear. Further it is the late flowering hostas that have the genetic potential for the most interesting flowers in color and fragrance but even 'Aphrodite' and its beautiful, double flowers is not a must have hosta. I must admit, we do seem to sell a lot of *H. plantaginea* but only when it is in bloom.

All this aside, I am more positive about this than I may sound. As a hybridizer I look into hosta flowers more than the average hosta grower does. I see the rich purple stripes and smell for faint fragrance. I even make a few crosses each year just for flowers, but more to understand the genetics than produce the next great "top ten" introduction. Each August when I visit Cornelia Holland outside Nashville, and I must admit, we look more at flowers than foliage but if you think any of this means I think hosta flowers come close to hosta foliage, you are mistaken. Give me any bright red-petioled seedling any day over your best scape of hosta flowers.

As for the hosta flower shows, "bring them on", I say. They should however be staged in August or September when the range of flowers is the greatest and the hosta foliage the poorest. It will be fun to see what the public thinks. Since many of them cut their hosta flowers off before they bloom, they may ask, "Where are the hostas?" Maybe they will leave their flowers on next year, maybe not.

Let's get back to foliage. When I first met Nancy, I was overwhelmed by her cactus and succulent collection. True, they have really neat flowers when they finally bloom, but you collect them mostly for their different foliage. Nancy now collects ligularias (including farfugiums) not for the tall spikes of yellow flowers but for the foliage. Our tricyrtis collection is great when it blooms in the fall in the midst of our half-brown hostas but we buy them in summer mostly based on their different foliage types.

The elephant ears also have come and gone. We are just a little too cold for them to be totally happy outside but they lived with us for two or three years in a kiddie pool on the back deck until the real estate became too valuable. Then last year, Cody fell in love with the foliage of sempervivums. We now have 20 troughs full of them over-wintering on the front porch and I am learning how to tell them apart.

With this foliage mentality, I have always feared conifer gardens and especially conifer nurseries. The evergreens are really just woody hostas. They come in green, blue, yellow and variegated, sound familiar. Many are produced by sports. They come in many sizes and minis (dwarf ones) are very cute and fit perfectly in a trough with hostas or semps. There are thousands of them, like hostas and many may look the same to the novice but I'm sure I can learn to tell them apart also. This summer we traded mini hostas for dwarf conifers and all we have is shade. This could be really bad.

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Nancy has now gotten the *Amorphophyllus* bug. She does not need them all but they all have to look different, not the flowers, the leaves. Most of them for sale, if not all, are grown from seed so selecting just the right specimen is like being turned loose in a hosta hybridizer's seedling house. I imagine the flowers will vary slightly too, but the foliage can vary dramatically if you have that hosta eye. I found a real beauty of some species I can not pronounce that had black petioles, (a hosta term!). It was the only one of the lot. Surely, it should have been held back and not found its way to the sale table. Now, I hope we do not kill it.

I am always amazed that other plant collectors think that hosta gardens are just beds and beds of hostas and labels. I have never been in a hosta garden that did not have a wide variety of plants. Finding flowers that bloom well in the shade is difficult so hosta folks grow lots of varied foliage plants from cyclamen to ferns to Japanese maples. Any flowers are really a bonus. Hosta people really are foliage people.

I think hosta folks, if they are really addicted, (you know if you are), look at all plants with hosta eyes. If there is a variegated streak anywhere on a normally all green plant of any kind, our hosta eye will find it. Then with hosta pride we will point it out to the plant's owner or if it is for sale, we will quickly buy it before anyone else notices the streak. Whether we can grow the plant or not doesn't matter, hosta lust will engulf us.

Our hosta fingers are always on the lookout for plants with great substance. Oh, if only we could have a hosta with as much substance as that *Alocasia* in the hotel lobby. We let our finger and thumb wander across the surface of this plant and that plant, alarmed when they found their way into a sappy spot along the way. Hostas have spoiled us, they are well groomed plants, always smooth to the touch, never sticky.

Our hosta hearts yearn for red. Any plant with red, pink, or purple petioles requires a second look. There are now hellebore seedlings that are selected for their red petioles and sold at a "special" price. This is marketing to hosta folks. (Those hellebores with the splashed leaves are selected for us too, you can be sure.) Red leaves are better. Tropical plants seem to do it so easily, why not hostas? We go home dreaming of red-leaved hostas.

I guess this foliage business struck me hardest when I was looking at a bed of 600 of the newest day-lilies, each one at peak bloom. The color was intoxicating and the differences in form overwhelming. I just stood there frozen in the bright sunlight. A certain clump suddenly jumped out from the rest capturing my full attention. It had the richest dark green upright foliage I had ever seen. I reached down and with finger and thumb and immersed myself in its substance. Then I took a deep breath, pulled out my ballot and wrote in its name. Hosta rules! ♥

MEETING MINUTES: August 16, 2009

Nancy, Bob, and Cody (a very good driver by the way) graciously invited us all into their garden for the afternoon. Nancy's munchies made your mouth water, the scenery was fabulous, and the company was outstanding. Judy Burns, the Dixie Regional Director, made the journey north to join us for our meeting and afternoon of fun. Toni Wright (founder of the Dixie Region), and Hugh and Claudia Walker, Atlanta area hosta enthusiasts, also joined us. Judy gave us an early heads up on the Dixie Regional Convention scheduled for July 15-17, 2009 in Waynesville, NC. MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!!! Judy discussed the upcoming National Convention in Nashville in 2012, and asked that anyone interested in assisting in anyway contact the folks in Nashville. They would appreciate any and all volunteers. You should call Cornelia Holland, 615.794.4153, or e-mail plantaginea@aol.com, if you are interested in helping. Judy encouraged everyone to purchase hostas from reputable nurseries, preferably a nursery you have gotten to know. So, please take some time to get to know your local specialty nurseries personally It can be a REALLY GOOD thing for everyone! Simpson congratulated Bob Solberg on having six hostas in the annual AHS popularity polls. He then discussed the qualities of the hosta 'Sharp Dressed Man' that made him especially fond of it. Simpson made seed packets available for everyone who wanted to germinate and compare seedlings at the next meeting. Bob Solberg spoke on Southern Blight problems; he discussed how to recognize the symptoms of this disease and how to employ the control methods of 10 % bleach solution and Terrachlor. Bob's other topic was fragrant hostas. The important thing to remember here is to plant them where you can enjoy them – by the walkway in and out of the house, by the doorway, the screen porch, etc. Katherine Minard gave the treasurer's report, and we moved on to the plant swap. All of the folks attending the meeting participated in a wonderful plant swap; there were some unusual contributions at this meeting. One of the newest members of the group, Evelyn Eason, 4 months, treated the adults to a photo shoot in the garden after the formal meeting ended. Thanks again to Bob, Nancy, and Cody for their hospitality. Hopefully they will invite us back again, (hint, hint).

Respectfully submitted, Beth Barnes, Secretary



66 Cody's Way
Franklinton, NC 27525

We're on the Web
www.CarolinaHosta.org

Hope to see you at the winter meeting/pot luck in Randleman January 24th!

WINTER MEETING DETAILS

Date: Sunday, Jan 24, 2010 **Location:**
Time: 2:00 PM New Salem United Methodist Church
Host: Everyone 623 New Salem Rd, Randleman, NC 27317

DIRECTIONS

FROM GREENSBORO: From I-85, take US 220 S. Take the Level Cross exit and turn left at top of ramp. Go to stoplight, turn right onto US 220 bus. Bear left onto Old Greensboro Rd, go to stop sign. Turn left on New Salem Rd and Church is first driveway on left.

FROM ASHEBORO: From US 64, take US 220 bypass N to Randleman exit. At the third stop light turn left onto US 220 bus. Turn right on New Salem Rd, church is on left in one mile.

The **North Carolina Hosta Society** invites all members and guests to attend our annual pot luck winter meeting. We will meet at Audrey Wood's church in Randleman where we met at last year. Everyone is asked to bring a dish or two and the club will supply cups, plates, forks, napkins, tea and coke. If you want something else to drink you can bring it along. Simpson will talk about hosta seedlings and you can bring your own babies to show and tell.

We hope you will all come and bring a friend!

To quote Lou Erickson: **"Gardening requires lots of water - most of it in the form of perspiration"**

Editor's Notes:

Welcome to my first newsletter ever! Please forgive any mistakes as I learn this process. At our last meeting we had a couple of new officers elected. Simpson Eason remains President, Katherine Minard remains Treasurer, Beth Barnes was elected Secretary, Bob Solberg was elected Vice President and I (Nancy Solberg) was elected Newsletter Editor. My new position also includes managing the NCHS website. This too, is something that I have much to learn about. After a lesson from Angie and lots of trial and error I hope that you will begin to see some changes and updates in the website. My goal is to put more photos on the site and I would love to include any of yours from recent meetings. Please be patient with me and feel free to give me your ideas of what you would like to see on the website. I can be reached at hostanancy@gmail.com.

See you the 24th!!