



Shady Notes

Volume 24, Issue 9

October, 2023



President
Phyllis Weidman

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

We have made it through the terribly hot weather to cooler conditions. My hostas look terrible. Between celery sticks, thanks to deer, and dried up leaves from no rain, my garden just wants to go to sleep.

Did you have Nematodes this fall? You need to be prepared in the spring to start putting Nemakill or Nemastop on the crown when the pips appear. Then spray the crown and leaves every two weeks for a month. This will never get rid of them but will decrease their numbers so you will not have nearly the problem.

My biggest concern this year is voles. They dig under the hosta's crown and devour the root system. Sometimes you don't think you have them until you start removing the hosta leaves for the winter. I look for holes in the garden that go toward the crown and put poison in the hole. Sometimes it works. For those of you who will not use poison, you can use mouse traps. You can replant the crown if you see any roots, but it will take many years to be back to the beauty you once had.

Now to happy news: the Society has new officers, Bylaws and Standing Rules. All will take effect January 1, 2024. I want to thank the committees that worked hard to get this done. They deserve all our thanks; it is not an easy job. You should be getting an email with the Bylaws and Standing Rules attached. The Bylaws and Standing Rules can always be found at stlhosta.org.

Phyllis

2023 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 15	Meeting with Speaker Mike Wagner 2:00 PM, Des Peres Lodge 1050 Des Peres Rd., Des Peres, MO 63130
November 19	Board Meeting Home of Phyllis Weidman, Time TBD
December	Holiday Party Home of Melinda Ligon - Time and location TBD
February 23-24, 2024	Midwest Regional Society Winter Symposium Milwaukee, WI
June 18-22, 2024	AHS National Convention Marlborough, MA
July 11-13, 2024	Midwest Regional Hosta Convention Fond du Lac, WI

October 15 Meeting

2:00 pm, Des Peres Lodge
1050 Des Peres Road, Des Peres, MO 63130

Bee Keeper Mike Wagner

Do you know that bees have five eyes and two stomachs? Does that make the old saying that 'one's eyes are bigger than one's stomach' true for bees? Do you know that every bee colony has its own scent so that the bees know each other and which hive is their home? Have you ever wondered how far a bee can fly and how fast? What causes that buzzing sound? With all this flying around, do bees need sleep? After a long forage, how do bees find their way back to their hive. Questions, questions, questions.

Our October featured speaker is beekeeper Mike Wagner who is in charge of mentor programs with the Eastern Missouri Beekeepers Association. Mike was originally scheduled for our June meeting at the home of Martha LaFata. That event had to be cancelled because of the threat of severe thunderstorms. Mike will answer these questions and tell us everything we want to know about bees and their habits.



Beekeeper Mike Wagner
photo from
easternmobeekeepers.com



Bees hard at work
photo from Facebook page Wright
County Beekeepers

September Meeting

Dean Gunderson

Our September speaker Dean Gunderson is the Director of Education for Seed St. Louis. He explained that this is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that supports a network of over 250 community gardens, school gardens, and urban orchards in neighborhoods throughout the St. Louis region. Its purpose is to provide communities with the tools, education and encouragement to grow their own food. They provide the expertise to get projects started – establish reasonable goals, create an affordable plan, provide tools and materials needed.

Through his work with Giving Grove Orchards, Dean searched for plants that would grow under the fruit trees the communities were planting. Hostas came to mind immediately. Dean had heard that hostas were grown in Japan as a food crop. Could that be done here? Were hostas really edible? Dean decided to find out.

Research showed that hostas in Japan are grown in a large field like corn. Seedlings are densely planted in long beds buried in a foot of rice hulls. This results in long blanched shoots like asparagus. The shoots are harvested until the plant dies. However, in America hostas are bred for pretty leaves, not food. This has led to the development of well over 7,000 cultivars. No one has spent much time finding out which of these thousands might taste good. Dean decided he was up to the task.

He contacted a member of our Society who had labelled hostas and was willing to let him eat them. He prioritized his selections. The hostas must do well in our Midwest climate, be vigorous growers, have large shoots, be tall, be readily available for sale, and have a diversity of emergence times.

Dean and his loving wife lightly stir-fried each shoot in a neutral oil and a dash of salt. Each shoot was moved to a carefully labelled cookie sheet. Several adventurous friends sampled the buffet and rated the cultivars. In all, 69 cultivars were tasted. Reactions ranged from asparagus-like to bland and flavorless to rotten fish. 17 were rated good, 14 rated not good as food, while 38 would be fine in a recipe. Other observations: flavors are milder when first emerge, petioles of some good even when mature, don't try to stir-fry the leaves.

Dean and his gallant group gave a thumbs-up to *H. 'Victory'* and *H. 'Viking Ship'* and a resounding NO to *H. nigrescens*. The later was quite bitter and left a lingering bad taste in the mouth. Dean plans to continue his research. I don't think I will invest money in a hosta farm in the near future, but it was a fun project.



Dean Gunderson talking about his hosta research.



Urban orchard



H. 'Victory' a winner in the Gunderson taste test.

2023 Benedict Medal of Honor for Garden Performance Award

The Benedict Medal is the highest Garden Performance Award given by the American Hosta Society. It is presented at the AHS National Convention each summer. The Benedict Medal identifies the very best hostas - those found to be not only beautiful plants, but ones that also perform well in gardens in all parts of the country.

Selection is a three-year process. Cultivars are first nominated by the plants' originator or the AHS Board of Directors. AHS Garden Performance Judges from across the country vote on the plants on this list. If a plant receives sufficient votes, it is awarded the Honorable Mention Award. In the next year's voting, only Honorable Mention plants are eligible for the Award of Merit. Approximately ten hostas make this list. Finally, the following year from the Award of Merit winners a single plant is chosen to receive the Benedict Medal. Quite a rigorous test!

The 2023 voting resulted in a tie. The winners, announced at the AHS National Convention held in June in Ames Iowa are **H. 'Neptune'** and **H. 'Clear Fork River Valley'**. Both cultivars are sometimes available in local nurseries and are excellent candidates for inclusion in your gardens.



H. 'Neptune'

photo from Walters Gardens

Developed by Hans Hansen of Walters Gardens and registered in 2006, *H. 'Neptune'* is appropriately named for the mythological god of the sea. It is a medium-large hosta, 24 inches tall by 47 inches wide, with cascading waves of rippled, narrow, wedge-shaped pointed leaves. As the season progresses the leaves turn more blue-green. The backs of the leaves are white. Lavender flowers appear on tall arching scapes, approaching 32 inches, in late summer. The leaves are of heavy substance which offers some resistance to slugs. Moderately fast growing, *H. 'Neptune'* is easily recognized from afar. It makes a beautiful specimen in the home garden.

Hans Hansen is currently head of the Walters Gardens hybridizing team and is known in the hosta world for introducing new and improved plants, some of which are *H. 'Fire and Ice'*, *H. 'Touch of Class'*, *H. 'Pandora's Box'* and more recently *H. 'Silly String'*.

Hans says he began gardening at the tender age of 4 by planting onions in the family vegetable garden. As a child he went to garden club meetings. Unlike most children, he begged for plants for Christmas and birthdays. In high school Hans moved on to hybridizing Asiatic lilies. The next step was hostas and peonies.

Hans has spent most of his career working with baptisia, lily, hosta and peony, but has also worked extensively with over 70 perennial genera. He's introduced various cultivars of agastache, clematis, digiplexis, helleborus, heuchera, heucherella, hibiscus, mangave, lagerstroemia, nepeta, salvia, sedum, and veronica.

Are there more Benedict Medals in his future?

2023 Benedict Medal of Honor for Garden Performance Award



photo from plantsgalore.com

H. 'Clear Fork River Valley' is a distinctive hosta registered in 2007 by Van Wade of Wade and Gatton Nursery. A cross of H. 'Puckered Giant' and H. 'Woodland Blue', it forms a 26" x 51" wide mound.

The dark green leaves are very heavily corrugated, cupped and with thick substance. Near white flowers appear in clusters from late June into July.

Like 'Neptune', 'Clear Fork River Valley' can be recognized from afar.

Van Wade (1930-2017) took over the running of the family nursery, Wade and Gatton Nursery located in Ohio, in 1962 upon the death of his father. He grew the business to include over 1500 daylilies and 2500 hostas. Van was a renowned grower and hybridizer. Many of his introductions have Richland or American as the first part of their names. He also named several after Indian chiefs.

Van was known for his welcoming smile, great stories and bottomless generosity. His goal was to have one of his plants in every garden – visitors to his nursery usually left with more plants than they bought. He was a generous contributor to AHS convention auctions. He served on the Boards of both the American Hosta Society and the American Hosta Growers Association.

Van was the recipient of the 2002 AHS Alex J Summers Distinguished Merit Award. In 2017 he and his wife Shirley were honored by AHS with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

The nursery was an incredible place to visit. Now closed, was recently designated the Wade Botanical Garden and holds the largest single hosta collection in the world with over 3200 different cultivars.

WELCOME NEW MEMBER!

Brian Davies of St. Louis, MO

It is exciting to have you as new members in our society. Hope you will be able to join us on October 15 to meet beekeeper Mike Wagner.

Bylaws and Standing Rules

At the September meeting changes to our existing Bylaws and a new Standing Rules document were presented to the members present. After discussion and a few amendments, the members voted to approve the documents. One item that will affect members in 2024 is a change to the society's dues structure.

Currently two types of membership are available, individual or family, for one year or three years. Nowhere was the word 'family' defined. Starting on January 1, 2024, the Society will offer household memberships. A 'household' is defined as no more than two people living at the same residence. Dues will be \$10 for one year or \$20 for three years. For existing members, the dues increase goes into effect when the membership is renewed.

Meet Your New Officers!



President Gene Pulliam, Vice-president Janelle Criscione, Treasurer Lynn Teller



Secretary David Birenbaum at MOBot Work Day



Gene hosting bon voyage party for Pam Wolkowitz.



Auctioneers extraordinaire: Janelle and Gene



Lynn manning the information table at Vendor Day



Janelle with garden walk speaker



David switched hats - from Treasurer to Secretary seen here with Jane Hogg and Mike Teller



Lynn working the MOBot Plant Sale

St. Louis Hosta Society Officials

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St. Louis Hosta Society Membership Information

Contact:

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Dues:

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

Meetings held at **The Des Peres Lodge, 1050 Des Peres Road, Des Peres, MO 63130** (near I270 and Manchester Rd) 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 MRHS is \$20.00 for 2 years, which includes two issues per year of *The Hosta Leaves* newsletter.

Please mail a check payable to MRHS to:

Mona Keehn, Treasurer
1635 Chippewa Drive NW
Rochester MN 55901

Please include your Name, Address, Phone, and Email (most correspondence is by email), for questions please 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/>