

Shady Notes

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ST LOUIS
HOSTA
SOCIETY



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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



President Dave Birenbaum Proudly Displays the Golden Ladle Received for Having the Winning Chili at our October Chili Cook Off

Greetings Fellow Gardeners:

Perhaps like you, as I begin to contemplate packing up the winter gear with spring right around the corner, it gives me reason to consider several things on my garden want-to-do list. First thing I did with the recent heat wave was stroll through my garden inspecting for winter damages, related cleanup needs, and minor repair to my 8' deer fence. Of course, reflecting on last year's accomplishments (and a few woes) with a lot of scrutinizing for improvements was foremost on my mind. As I kicked aside some remaining snow, signs of rebirth in the form of a tiny bit of greenery popping up gave me that joy I imagine many gardeners feel after some brutal weather.

I can hardly contain myself when the hosta pips emerge...I'll leave that to another letter.

Know that the seven Board members have been communicating frequently as the Activities Schedule is firmed up for this year. The schedule will be available at www.stlhosta.org, on our Facebook page, and herein. A large part of the program is to hold a number of walks

through private gardens, mostly during the earlier part of the season. I am always scouting for gardens for the Society to visit, so *please* contact me or any Board member about yours or any leads.

Various education opportunities about our favorite plant will take place at garden walks. A big Thank You and a shout out to long-time members (and Society founders) Bruce and Chick Buehrig for their program held the last day of January at Timberwinds Nursery, which focused on hostas and conifers as stars and backdrop in their mid-County garden.

Among other things, the Society will host our second biennial bus trip on May 16 and 17. We'll make a few stops involving hostas in private and public gardens. The Society will pick up the

bus cost. Attendees pay an activity fee that covers other trip costs and provide out-of-pocket for a couple meals and a motel night. We'll share details when nailed down.

Of course, we will hold our public plant sale at Missouri Botanical Garden on Saturday of Mother's Day weekend, May 9 with many dozens of plants sourced from MO Bot and members' gardens. We'll also have a Member and Friend Hosta Auction on another weekend. Both of these are great ways to acquire new plants for your garden. Know that these sales provide the majority of operational funding for the Society.

Lastly, an agreement has been reached with the Missouri Botanical Garden for our club to fund the cost of a work vehicle assigned for use of the horticulturist assigned to the hosta area. MO Bot will acquire a plaque that will display our Logo on the Toro dump cart. The Society has a long-standing tradition of funding all hosta purchases there and several members volunteer

Thursday mornings during the growing season to tend to the hosta area. This will be the largest donation the St. Louis Hosta Society has undertaken. Gratefully, SLHS has reserves to cover the contribution, much funded by successful plant sales that have benefitted by the numerous splits from hostas grown at MO Bot.



Toro MDX Vehicle

I look forward to the spring and meeting members at our kickoff meeting on March 22.

Hostily,

- Dave

Setting the Stage for a Great Hosta Season

Late winter is an important time for hosta gardeners. While the beds are quiet, what we do now can make a big difference once the growing season begins.



Take Stock of the Garden

This is the perfect time to walk your hosta beds and observe. Note areas where drainage may be poor, spots that stayed wet too long last year, or places where trees or shrubs have changed the light levels. A few minutes of observation now can guide smarter planting and bed adjustments later.

Clean Up—But Don't Rush It

If you haven't already, remove old hosta leaves and debris once they're no longer frozen to the ground. This helps reduce

overwintering pests and fungal issues. That said, avoid heavy digging or soil disturbance while the ground is still cold and wet—compacted soil now can cause problems all season long.

Plan Divisions and Transplants

Late winter is a great time to decide which hostas may need dividing this spring. Make notes or mark clumps that have outgrown their space. If you're planning to redesign a bed or move plants, having a plan in place makes spring work much smoother once the soil is workable.

Check Stored Plants

If you are overwintering hostas in pots or storage, now is the time to inspect them. Make sure crowns are firm, not dried out or mushy, and lightly moisten soil if needed. Catching problems early can save a prized plant.

Order Thoughtfully

It's easy to go overboard with pre-orders, but this is a good moment to think intentionally. Do you want to fill shady gaps, add more blue varieties, or try a few fragrant hostas? Maybe this is the year to splurge on a few special cultivars. And here's an unpopular piece of advice: have a plan for where the new plants will go.

Refresh Labels and Records

While you're stuck inside, take care of dull but necessary tasks like record keeping. Update garden maps, replace missing labels, and review notes from last season. Accurate



labeling saves confusion later, especially when pips are popping and everything looks the same for a few weeks.

Be Patient

Perhaps the hardest task of all: waiting. Resist the urge to uncover or fertilize too early. Hostas know what they're doing, and a little patience now helps prevent frost damage and stress. Before long, the garden will be awake again. The quiet work of late winter and early spring sets the foundation for a healthy, beautiful hosta season - one that we'll all be admiring in just a few short months.

HOSTA SPOTLIGHT: *H.* 'GIGANTOSAURUS'

If you have room for a very large hosta, consider *H.* 'Gigantosaurus'. One of the first hostas to emerge in early spring, it begins with blue leaves edged in a wavy yellow margin that mature to creamy white by summer. *H.* 'Gigantosaurus', created by Hans Hansen, is a streaked sport of *H.* 'Empress Wu' and *H.* 'Blueberry Muffin'. Mature size is 30" tall x 76" wide.



H. 'Gigantosaurus' Photo Credit: Hans Hansen

HOSTA OF THE YEAR PROGRAM CHANGES HANDS



Most likely you have a few Hostas of the Year in your garden (perhaps all of them!). The American Hosta Growers Association (AHGA) created the program in 1996 to help nursery and garden center owners purchase varieties that would perform well for gardeners across the country. In addition, selections had to be widely available in sufficient supply and retail for \$15-\$20. This program ended in 2025 with the selection of *Hosta* 'Skywriter.'

Enter the American Hosta Society (AHS). The AHS Board voted to take on the program and will use the winner of the prestigious Benedict Garden Performance Award from the previous year as the Hosta of the Year. In cases where the Benedict Award winner has been an AHGA Hosta of the Year, another previous Benedict Award winner will be selected. The Benedict Award honors the best-of-the-best hostas that have stood the test of time. This is a change from the AHGA selection criteria which focused on marketing and sometimes chose unproven varieties that were relatively new to the market. The next two Hostas of the Year are *Hosta* 'Halcyon' for 2026 and *Hosta* 'Clear Fork River Valley' for 2027.

AHS Hosta of the Year 2026
Hosta 'Halcyon'



AHS Hosta of the Year 2027
Hosta 'Clear Fork River Valley'



AHS Hosta of the Year 2026

Hosta 'Halcyon'

Photo Credit: Mike Groothuis

Color: Blue

Size: Medium (24" H x 47" W)

Originator: Eric Smith 1988 (Created in 1961)

Flowers: Pale blue-violet in midsummer

Leaves are frosty blue-green and pointed. Retains blue leaf color longer than most other blue hostas. A superb grower with thick leaves, demonstrating good slug resistance.

AHS Hosta of the Year 2027

Hosta 'Clear Fork River Valley'

Photo Credit: Tammy Borden

Color: Blue Green

Size: Large (30" H x 55" W)

Originator: Van Wade 2007

Flowers: Near white or pale lavender from late June to July

Known for its intense, deep blue-green, heavily puckered (corrugated) leaves and excellent slug resistance. It grows into a large mound.

Seven Levels of Hosta Gardeners

The Evolution of Passion, Spending, and Garden Space Dedicated to Hostas

Adapted from a post on Houzz.com originated by user dhaven



Level 1: The Casual Gardener: Buys a few hostas for shady spots, often not knowing or caring about plant names. These gardeners often plant the same variety in a ring around their trees while proudly telling you that they have both types of hostas: the plain green and the ones with the white edge.

Level 2: The Interested Gardener: Starts learning variety names and buys a few more specific, named cultivars. These gardeners have decided to make hostas a more major part of their gardens by building a collection

of as many of 20 hosta varieties. They often have multiple plants of the same variety, again often featured as rings around trees or along walks and drives. All their plants tend to be of medium size, mainly because they are unaware that hostas come in any other size, and that is what's available locally.

Level 3: The Collector: Begins buying more diverse types (variegated, blues, fragrant) and searching for specific favorites. These budding hostaholics have discovered that hostas come in all colors, patterns, and sizes, and they start to feel the need to gather together as many as they can. Often, they will add 30 or 40 hostas in a year, then start digging up lawn and adding beds so they can add more hostas next year. Many wind up with a collection of 100-200 varieties in a fairly short time. These people label their plants, often make maps, and can usually identify at least half their plants without looking at the label. These gardens generally have lots of medium and large hostas, with very few minis.

Level 4: The Avid Collector: Garden space begins to fill up. They are attending plant sales, visiting nurseries, and aware of new, popular varieties. These major hostaholics have 200+ varieties from giants to minis, know the names of all their plants, and lust after every new hosta they see. They tend to be somewhat restricted in their purchases due primarily to lack of garden space, but regularly add new varieties, often digging up and giving away their more common varieties to do so. These people can often speak knowledgeably about the heritage of any given hosta, and may have a passing familiarity with some of the hybridizers. They belong to at least one hosta club, and travel to local and national conventions.



Level 5: The Addicted Gardener: These are the hard-core hosta maniacs. These people have 500+ varieties, know the name, lineage, and breeding potential of every single one of them, and often dabble in hybridizing a few of their own hostas. They have extensive hosta libraries, and are easily identified by the lack of grass on their properties, and also by the lack of any plant other than hostas. This group is where you are likely to find the really beautiful specimen plants, because these people not only love hostas, they know how to grow them to perfection. Minis are often a special feature of this group, and there are usually multiple plants of a given variety.

Level 6: The Hosta Specialist: Next, are the collectors. Their gardens are comprised almost entirely of hostas. They often have 800-1500 hostas, and can rattle off all pertinent information about any of their plants at the drop of a hat--whether you want them to or not. As a rule, they love having visitors to their gardens, and expect that said visitors will treat them with the deference and respect that is engendered by the amassing of large amounts of plants. The collector is interested only in the newer varieties, and particularly loves to spend lots of money to get something that nobody else (except the hybridizer) has in their garden. Most collectors seem to favor the larger or showier varieties, and you will find a



preponderance of variegated hostas in these gardens. There will seldom be more than one plant of any variety in the garden of a true collector.

Level 7: The "Hosta Geek" / Expert: The highest level of obsession, often involves hybridizing new hostas. The seventh group is the hybridizer. These people often worked their way through the various levels, then at some point decided that it would be fun to

create their own hostas. They are often fixated on streakers, and will spend vast amounts of money to obtain a really nice one. They have lost all interest in the common, commercially available hostas, and buy and trade only with other hybridizers to obtain new genetics. They rarely open their gardens to visitors, because who has time for that? But it is thanks to some of these people that all the new, wonderful hostas become available, so they are to be appreciated.

MEET THE MOBOT HOSTA GARDEN HORTICULTURIST!



Hi, I'm Ash!

I recently graduated from Oregon State University with a B.S. in Sustainable Horticulture Production and an Entomology minor. I love learning about plants and insects so that I can apply my knowledge to helping my gardens thrive. You can easily find me in the Hosta or Blue garden by looking for someone wearing funky earrings.



Our Garden Walk Schedule is Missing One Key Piece...Gardens!

Gardens Wanted!

We are looking for gardens to add to our Garden Walk schedule. While we are fortunate to have many members with gardens of Display Garden quality, please do not let that intimidate you.

If you would like to offer your garden or have a friend or neighbor with a must-see garden that includes hostas, please let [Dave](#) or any Board member know.

BOTANY AND BLOOD: PLANTS IN TRUE CRIME

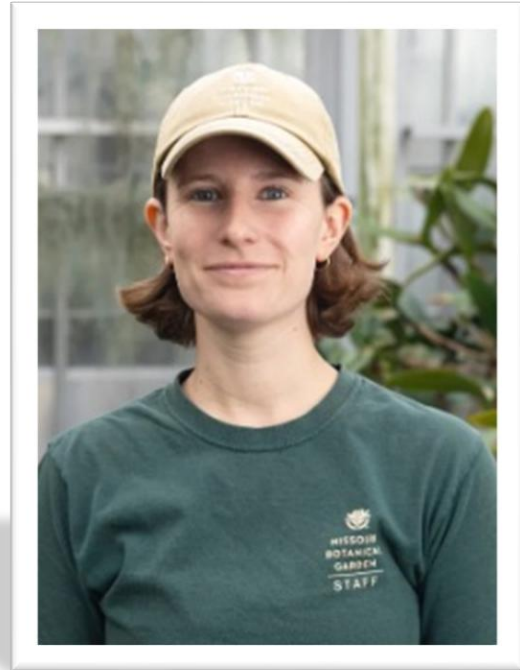
This time of year, our gardens are still looking lifeless, almost like a crime scene. So, what a perfect time to have Senior Horticulturist Claire Krofft give a talk on forensic botany!

“Botany and Blood: Plants in True Crime”

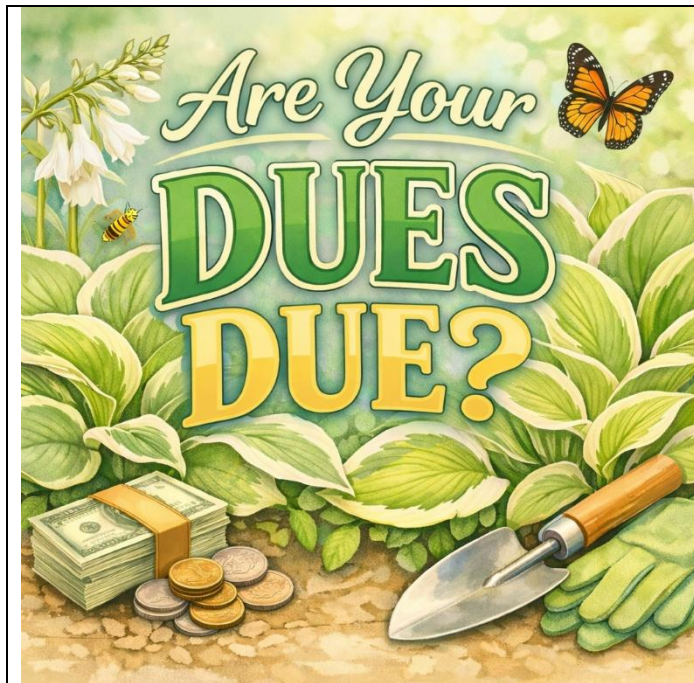
Come along as we explore the fascinating intersection between the natural world and some of the most notorious true crime stories. From toxic plants used in historic poisonings to botanical evidence found at crime scenes, we will delve into how plants played a pivotal role in both creating and cracking criminal investigations.

Sunday, March 22
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm

MoBot CBEC Building
[4651 Shaw Blvd, St Louis MO 63110](https://www.mobot.org/4651-Shaw-Blvd-St-Louis-MO-63110)



Claire Krofft, Senior Horticulturist at the Missouri Botanical Garden
Photo by Nathan Kwarta




Memberships for the St Louis Hosta Society run from January – December. Dues are payable at the first of the year (but in practice, are collected at the first meeting).

You will receive an email if your membership term is up for renewal along with payment options if you don't plan to attend the March meeting.

OPPORTUNITIES FROM ANOTHER LOCAL GARDEN CLUB



We have been invited to attend the following St Louis Water Garden Society ([SLWGS](#)) events.

<p>PROGRAM: A Dark Side to Your Garden (Betsy Alexander-MGSS)</p> <p>Even the most beautiful plants can be hiding a dangerous secret. Some of the most charming botanicals can have a dark side- one that pokes, prickles, stings, or poisons! We are shining the spotlight on these bad guys—Learn how to identify the risks they pose and discover safer alternatives to keep your garden both gorgeous, pet safe, and guest-friendly. RSVP to kasoehng@sbcglobal.net</p> <p>Saturday, March 21, 11am</p> <p>Grace Episcopal Church 514 E. Argonne Ave, Kirkwood, MO 63122</p> <p><i>Refreshments will be provided</i></p>	 <p>SLWGS PLANT SALE</p> <p>Saturday, April 25th</p> <p>9am-4pm</p> <p>Grace Episcopal Church 514 E. Argonne Ave, Kirkwood, MO 63122</p>
<p>Pond-o-Rama Volunteer Opportunity</p> <p>Work one 4-hour shift and receive a free pass for the event</p> <p>June 27-28, 2026</p> <p>This is a new program that SLWGS is initiating this year. We are seeking volunteer Greeters to assist our POR Tour Hosts on tour day. This would consist of the volunteer being positioned at the entrance of a home, offering a friendly welcome, and checking-in tour visitors as they arrive.</p> <p>In appreciation for sitting for a <i>four-hour shift</i>, the volunteer will be given a free pass for the TWO-DAY event (one and a half days of free touring.) A Greeter orientation session and online information will be provided prior to the event.</p> <p>This is a fantastic opportunity to visit some of the most interesting gardens in our area. For more information or to volunteer please contact Lori Stringer at loristringbean@gmail.com</p>	

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<p>March 22, 2026 12:00 pm (Lunch) 12:30 pm (Program) Sunday</p>	<p>Lunch and Program</p>	<p>Club will provide a pizza lunch prior to the program.</p> <p>If your last name begins with A-M, please bring a salad and if your last name begins with N-Z, please bring a dessert.</p> <p>Please RSVP to our Hospitality Chair Kathie at kasoehng@sbcglobal.net by March 15 to ensure we have enough pizza for everyone.</p> <p>“Botany and Blood: Plants in True Crime”</p> <p>Speaker Claire Krofft with the Missouri Botanical Garden</p> <p>Come along as we explore the fascinating intersection between the natural world and some of the most notorious true crime stories. From toxic plants used in historic poisonings to botanical evidence found at crime scenes, we will delve into how plants played a pivotal role in both creating and cracking criminal investigations.</p> <p>MoBot CBEC Building 4651 Shaw Blvd, St Louis MO 63110</p>
<p>May 9, 2026 9:00 am Saturday</p>	<p>Plant Sale</p>	<p>Public plant sale of mostly hostas from member gardens, splits from the Missouri Botanical Garden, and year-end purchases from local nurseries.</p> <p>Setup will be the night before unless it is raining and the Garden needs to move their Grapes in the Garden event indoors. More information to follow</p> <p>MoBot Main Building 4344 Shaw Blvd, St Louis MO 63110</p>
<p>May 16-17 2026 Saturday and Sunday</p>	<p>Bus Trip</p>	<p>Details still in progress</p>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<p>June 10 – 13, 2026 (Weds – Saturday)</p>	<p>National Convention</p>	<p>American Hosta Society Convention in Dublin, OH Embassy Suites by Hilton • Dublin, OH</p>  <p>2026 AHS Convention - Dublin, OH</p>
<p>July 9 – 11, 2026 (Thurs – Saturday)</p>	<p>Regional Convention</p>	<p>Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention in Madison, WI</p>  <p>2026 MRHS CONVENTION</p> <p>50TH ANNIVERSARY</p> <p>WHS MADISON, WI</p>

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St. Louis Hosta Society Membership Information

Application is available on our [website](#) or
contact [Lynn](#)

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

Membership term is January - December

Please visit our website
stlhosta.org

Check us out on Facebook
[St Louis Hosta Society](#)

THE AMERICAN HOSTA SOCIETY



Join the American Hosta Society and get to know America's most popular perennials and those who love them. Memberships range from \$30 - \$40/year with multi-year discounts.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Full-color print issue of The Hosta Journal mailed twice each year
- Unique digital edition of The Hosta Journal emailed once each year
- Access to "Members Only" section of the website
- Access to display gardens throughout the country, many of which are only open to AHS members
- Eligibility to purchase a member-only hosta
- Exclusive invitation to exhibit hostas and compete for recognition in AHS-sanctioned Hosta Shows
- Updates on speaker programs, events, awards, plant auctions, news, and more!

FIRST-TIME MEMBERS ALSO RECEIVE

- \$15 voucher for use at participating nurseries
- Option to receive an exclusive gift hosta (additional \$10 to cover shipping)
- Hosta Adventure—A Grower's Guide, a primer on hostas outlining what every gardener should know
- Hosta of the Year Booklet, a full-color publication featuring the American Hosta Growers Association Hostas of the Year

Join Today at americanhostasociety.org

THE MIDWEST REGIONAL HOSTA SOCIETY



Membership in the society is \$20.00 for two years for both an individual or family membership. A family membership includes the primary member and his/her significant other. Members receive two issues per year of the society's newsletter, *The Hosta Leaves*. **First time members receive a voucher for \$10.00, good for purchases at our participating Hosta Vendors.**

In addition there are two meetings held annually. The Winter Symposium is held in the Milwaukee area in early February. It is a one-day event with an assortment of speakers that present the latest information pertaining to Hostas and gardening with them. All of this is offered in an enjoyable and down-to-earth format with something for everyone interested in gardening and learning more about Hostas.

In the summer, an annual convention, hosted by a local society, is held in different locations throughout the region. This three-day extravaganza features garden tours, a show of Hosta leaves, vendors selling the newest in Hosta plants, an auction of plants, a banquet, and informational speakers.

Send your completed membership application and check to:

Mona Keehn, Treasurer
1635 Chippewa Drive NW
Rochester, MN 55901

[Printable MRHS Membership Form](#)