



Volume 22, Issue 4

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President
Phyllis Weidman

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

SNOW at the end of April! Then came the freezing temperatures, not good for all the tender growth in the garden. If one stands back, they look somewhat OK but come closer and you see the damage. Translucent leaves, limp leaves, brown flower buds and leaves with tan (dead) areas on Japanese maples, azaleas and hostas.

For hostas the best thing to do is trim off the already dead leaves leaving the petiole (stem) if healthy. Every bit of green will give strength to the plant. You all know about chlorophyll.

Trimming leaves may be a continuous process, but by June you will never know that this happened to your beautiful garden.

A beautiful garden is where we are going to try to gather again for a meeting. Not much business. But just getting together with people who love hostas will be wonderful. The program will be about dividing hostas. Right now, the plan is to have meetings through the summer and fall. Program ideas are always welcome. The society does have a data projector, we could hang a sheet and have a program. Also, we need locations to have the meetings. We are still thinking that outdoor meetings for the summer will be best. Got any ideas? Maybe you know a nursery or garden center where we could meet. Please let me or other board members know about your thoughts.

See you at the meeting!

Phyllis

Welcome New Member

Mary Ann Hatlelid of Webster Groves, MO

Welcome back Mary Ann. We hope you are able to join us at the upcoming meeting scheduled for May 16. It is right in your own neighborhood.

2021 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 16	Garden Walk/Meeting 1:30 PM, Home of Josh Jagger
June	Garden Walk/Meeting Time and location TBA
July 15-17	AHS National Hosta Convention (Virtual) Kalamazoo, MI
July	Garden Walk/Meeting TBA
September 19	Meeting with Speaker TBA 1:30 PM, TBA
October 17	Meeting with Speaker TBA 1:30 PM, TBA
November	Board Meeting Time and location TBA

We meet at last!

May 16, 1:30 PM

Home of Josh Jagger and Adam Leigh
8548 Big Bend Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63119
573-822-1777 or nemojosh82@yahoo.com

At long last we will be able to meet again. Society vice-president Josh Jagger is opening his garden for our May meeting. Last time members visited with

Josh, his garden was quite young. But he had a vision of how it would be some day. Let's see how it has fared. Many of his hostas should now be approaching maturity.

Following a brief meeting, there will be a demonstration of the correct method for dividing a hosta. Spring is a great time to divide your plants. It's not too hot and the plants are still small enough that it is easy to see eyes that might be removed without damage.

As not everyone might be vaccinated, masks are required. Food and drink will not be served. Please bring a lawn chair and any food or drink that you want for yourself.

Directions: Traveling either East or West on I-44, take the **S ELM Ave exit, exit 280**. Turn **North** onto S. Elm Ave. After 1.28 miles turn **right** onto Big Bend Blvd. Travel 0.28 miles. 8548 Big Bend Blvd is on the right (just past Plant Ave.)



Landscaping Tips for Backyard Gardeners Part IV

Spring is a time of discovery. Slip on a jacket and stroll through your yard. It is exciting to see those first green leaves, hosta pips emerging, spring bulbs blooming. As the days pass, those first tender sprouts are shooting up making their presence known ... or not known! Oh dear, whatever happened to that caramel heuchera?. I know it was right here. Oh dear, shouldn't there be blossoms on that little redbud? Oh dear, what happened to that evergreen, there is no new growth. Suddenly there are holes in your well-designed flower bed.

Let a pot come to your rescue. Problem solving is one common use for a plant-filled container, be it a sunny or shady location. A shrub dies and leaves a large barren area of mulch. A tree succumbs and leaves behind a three-foot trunk or an unsightly stump. Turn these eye-sores into assets. Place a wire basket filled with colorful annuals or a hypertufa trough filled with mini hostas on that stump. Now the hostas are closer to eye level and the ugly dead tree disappears from sight. Josh Jagger cut a hole in a stump and inserted a potted hosta – good-bye eye-sore, hello focal point.

Pots are perfect for areas that are too wet, too dry or contain too many roots. Many of us are blessed, did I say blessed, with a maple. It is a great shade tree with beautiful fall color, but its roots form thick tangles near the surface of the soil. The shade is wonderful for growing hostas but the roots suck the moisture away from any plant placed there. The solution is pots. We have such a location in our yard. My husband built a large wooden box, affectionately known as “the coffin”, situated it under our maple and filled it with large hostas in plain black nursery pots. In front of the box, five hostas are planted in terra cotta pots directly in the ground. Each fall the pots are removed and stored under our deck. It is easy to change the look by rotating in other pots of hostas or even companion plants.

With the loss of a large spruce, the corner of our patio changed from shade to full sun. The arrangement of potted impatiens no longer worked. Even sun loving plantings had to be watered at least once a day. Then, at the AHS National Convention in Philadelphia we spied Chanticleer Garden's water pots. The perfect solution. Put corks in the drainage holes of any containers you like, fill them with water, immerse water-adapted plants in their black nursery pots and then dye the water black so that the nursery containers cannot be seen. Most nurseries have a section



Karen Frimel used square boxes to fill in and add to her garden design.



Josh Jagger eliminated an eye-sore by placing a hosta in a tree stump.



Dave Poos solved the problem of maple roots by burying his pots in the ground and above ground in a “coffin”.



Dave Poos' water pots solve the watering woes of a hot patio.

featuring water plants. The environmentally safe ink can be found in some garden and pond supply centers. It is amazing the ideas one can garner on a garden tour.

Another problem solving trick is to use pots to hide or draw attention away from eye-sores such as utility meters, air conditioners, catch basins or compost bins. Pots are movable thus allowing access for maintenance. They are also flexible. Swap plants out as the seasons change or the original planting becomes ratty looking.

Besides solving problems, pots can be great focal points in their own right. They can even be left empty. Use a single planter or arrange in groups – an odd number of containers gives the best balance. Group your containers close together when the plants are young to give a sense of fullness. As the plants grow, move the containers further apart.

Use pots to add a splash of color or pizzazz to your border. Bring color where it is needed or to that hard to plant area. Use one to add a vertical element that will pause the eye and give it a rest. Use one to pull your eye deeper into the recesses of your bed or border. Containers do not need to be big nor do they need to be conventional. Slip in some surprises. Pam Wolkowitz placed a potted hosta in an old roofless birdhouse and nestled it in her border. Karen Frimel snuggled mini hostas in a stone lying beside her garden path. Mike Schmitt used drainage tiles.

Pots aren't just for garden beds. Patios, porches and decks can expand your planting areas. Mike Schmitt's collection of hostas fills in an empty niche beside his back door and softens the edge of his outdoor space. Mike uses bricks and low wooden shelves to elevate some of the containers. Anne Birenbaum is an artist. A gaily planted amphora situated on the Birenbaum's front porch directs visitors to their door; another equally complex, draws one to the back deck. Colorful rail planters liven up the deck. Pots situated on the steps leading to Phyllis Weidman's deck call attention to the change in elevation, draw the eye upward and invites one to enter the space.

Hostas with their scene-stealing foliage are well suited to containers. There are several things to keep in mind when using hostas. First pick a container that is appropriate to the current size of the hosta, not to its ultimate size. There



Pam Wolkowitz's hosta in a birdhouse



Karen Frimel's hostas nestle in a rock



Mike Schmitt's unique drainage tile planters



Bring your hosta collection up on your patio as Mike Schmitt has.

should be no more than two to three inches of space between the wall of the container and the outer most roots of the hosta. Placing a tiny plant in a large container is a death sentence – it will languish and die. It will be necessary to pot up as the plant gets bigger, maybe even every year for those fast growers.

Good drainage is a must. Use fresh, high-quality potting mix, not garden soil. Potting mixes absorb and drain water better and are weed free. Plants will grow best in a mixture that is fertile and full of organic matter. Compost, ground tree bark, cotton burr or composted manure are good sources of organic matter. Add a gritty amendment like Turface. All these aid in drainage. Use a slow release fertilizer such as Osmocote when you pot. Frequent watering tends to leach away nutrients so it will be necessary to continue to fertilize now and then. Water below the leaf canopy and around the crowns and only if the soil is dry below the top one inch. A thorough drink less frequently is better than a bit of water each day.

Do not place pottery shards, rocks, Styrofoam pellets or like material to the bottom of your container. This does not improve drainage, takes up valuable root space and may lead to root rot. If you are using a very large pot and wish to reduce weight, bury plastic 2-liter juice or water bottles. Keeping the caps on prevents the bottles from collapsing. The potting mix in large urns is deep enough for root growth even with the bottles.

Containers are so versatile. Troughs of your own design can be crammed with mini and small hostas. Colorful pots filled with hostas brighten shady recesses. Pots can reclaim that area under maple trees where nothing else will grow. Containers stuffed with gay sun lovers or native plants say welcome. Concrete or brick patios and wooden decks become an extension of your flower beds. The options are boundless.



Anne Birenbaum's colorful arrangement welcomes visitors to their home.



This colorful combination of sun plants brightens the Birenbaums's back deck.



Phyllis Weidman encourages visitors to climb the steps to her back deck.



A larch growing in a large urn directs visitors to JoAnn Rawson's door.



Marian Murphy's simple red pot of caladiums adds a pop of color.



Mini hostas are ideally suited to troughs, such as this one, in Phyllis's garden.



Pam Wolkowitz elevated *H.* 'Rocket's Red Glare' to show off its red petioles.



Marian Murphy's wheelbarrow breaks up her backyard border with a splash of color.



This huge hosta sat on tree stump anchoring a bed in a Green Bay AHS tour garden.



Former members Kelly & Jeff Hall broke up a long retaining wall with elevated pots.



Any container works - Karen Frimel filled kitchen drawers with colorful impatiens.



Basil Honaker garden simple and elegant



Hosta in a basket hangs from an old firewood hoop in the Poos garden.



Karen Frey's sculptural planter bursts with color.

Avoiding Spring Frost Damage

by Ray Rodgers

The anticipation and excitement of early spring - Spring is a joyous time for gardeners, a time of great anticipation as we start wandering around our gardens looking for signs of new beginnings. Such excitement must be tempered with the realization that freezing temperatures are always a possibility until approx. mid-May in Central Illinois. The average last frost date for Peoria is May 8. Every year, I hope spring will come in gracefully, without the major temperature swings we have come to expect. Unfortunately, this rarely has happened.

Last year was a prime example. After efforts to protect my rapidly unfurling hosta leaves on a couple of occasions, I thought those days were once again behind us when we reached the month of May, only to be surprised by an unexpected (to me) frost, that damaged gardens throughout the area on the night of May 2 / May 3.

Every spring, I give credit to *H. 'On Stage'* as being the smartest hosta in my garden: as it is the last hosta to emerge from winter dormancy, making it much less susceptible to frost damage.

When hostas should be protected - It is important to realize that hostas, even completely leafed out, can withstand temperatures below freezing (32° F). I have repeatedly read that hostas can handle temperatures down to 28° F for short times with minimal or no damage.

During winter, if I find exposed hosta buds, I scrape a little mulch or soil mix from the surrounding area over them for protection. In very early spring, if shoots are starting to emerge, I often cover them in the same manner, in an attempt to slow their progress and provide additional protection.

If shoots are a few inches or more tall, yet leaves have not started to unfurl or are still in the early stages, and temperatures below 30° F are forecasted, I suggest providing additional protection via a choice of mulch or dried leaves piled around and over the emerging shoots. Alternatively, one of the protective methods described below can be utilized.

The more leafed-out hostas are, the more susceptible they are to frost damage. In these cases, covering via one of the methods described below is the best alternative.

One must consider the uniqueness of their gardens and plant placements when determining whether to protect or not. Of course, part of the decision process is how much trust one has in the accuracy of the forecast. Isn't that a scary thought!

Plant protection - If one decides to protect, there are many options. Basically almost anything that can cover a hosta will help. It is important not to let the leaves touch the covering material as they are more likely to sustain freeze damage at that contact, if the temperature gets low enough.

There are many methods for protecting your plants via covering. Materials include:

- Plastic pots (crumpled newspaper covering drainage holes improves protection)
- Newspapers
- Cardboard boxes
- Frost Cloth* (fabric material available through nursery supply companies. Search the Internet for options.)
- Bed sheets*
- Bath towels*
- Light blankets*
- Burlap*
- Garbage cans
- Bushel baskets
- Wheelbarrows turned upside down

*Need to be propped up and anchored down. I try to keep a bundle of sticks or stakes around for props. I have also used covered sawhorses over larger hostas. Bricks and rocks are good anchors and also work well to hold down plastic pots during windy conditions.

Polyethylene film or similar materials, including plastic bags, should be avoided as condensation buildup on the inside can increase the likelihood of damage to hosta leaves. These materials are also a danger once the sun comes out.

Another method is to keep a continuous spray of water on plants when the temperature is below 28° F, as water is warmer than the air.

The morning after - After all the chosen plants are protected from the impending freezing temperature (usually during the night), one must address the uncovering task the following morning. Keeping the plants covered until the temperature climbs back above freezing is the best option. But, if one has to go to work, family or neighbors may have to be called upon for help. If the forecast calls for temperatures to remain in the danger zone, keep the plants covered.

How cold is too cold - This somewhat depends on the number of hostas one has to protect. If hostas are completely leafed out and the temperature dips into the low 20's F, protective measures may reduce the severity, but it is unlikely that they will prevent freeze damage.

What should be done to frost damaged hostas - If hostas are hit by damaging frosts it is best to cut off and discard the most significantly damaged leaf tissue (sanitizing the cutting tool between plants), keeping as many of the undamaged leaves and petioles as possible to allow the continuation of the plant's food making process. At some point, if enough leaves are removed, hostas will force a second flush of leaves from smaller and previously dormant buds. This flush will likely produce smaller leaves.

Even worse than hosta leaves turning to mush, is the possibility of the crown being damaged, which if not attended to, typically allows rot to set in. The crown of the hosta is the base where the roots and shoots join. Crown rot can happen in early spring when water stands around the crown or by the plant freezing after it breaks dormancy. If hostas sustain significant leaf damage, be sure to check the crown for soft areas. If discovered, this tissue should be removed back to solid tissue to prevent further rot and possibly the death of the plant.

Which hostas are most frost sensitive - Late freezes can be a problem with any variety, especially the ones that break dormancy early. The species *H. plantaginea* and its sports have the reputation of being the most frost sensitive. It is widely believed all fragrant hostas have *H. plantaginea* in their lineage, making them candidates for protection. *H. plantaginea* is one of the only species that will continue to produce new leaves all summer long. This is an advantage when the original spring foliage becomes damaged.

Contrarily, I have read that hostas in the Sieboldiana Group and Tokudama Group are slow to recover from frost damage, as they tend to push only one good flush of growth in a season, also making hostas with these lineages, good candidates for protection. A few other of the more sensitive hostas include *H. montana* 'Aureomarginata', 'Sagae', 'Lancifolia', and 'Chinese Sunrise'.

New purchases - If hostas are purchased prior to mid-May, I suggest leaving them in pots so they can easily be moved to a protected area when frost warnings occur.

Is it worth the effort - Protecting hostas from freezing temperatures is certainly a hassle. Each of us has to determine for ourselves whether it is worth the effort and when to take protective measures. In my opinion, we must always be aware of the possibility of freezing temperatures and react accordingly to preserve the beauty of our gardens.

(Reprinted from the AHS Newsletter Editors article file)

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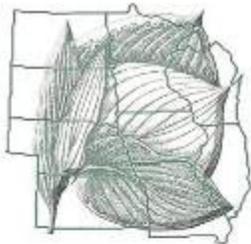
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Dues: \$7 per year, \$18 for three years
Family or Individual

Meetings held at the **Creve Coeur Government Center, 300 N. New Ballas, 63141** (between Ladue Road and Olive), unless otherwise noted.

Visit our Web site: www.stlouishosta.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 society is \$20.00 for 2 years, which includes two issues per year of the newsletter.

Please mail a check made payable to **MRHS** to:

Barbara Schroeder,
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along with Name, Address, phone, and email (Most correspondence is by email). For questions 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:

Sandie Markland, AHS Membership Secretary
P O Box 7539
Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948

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/>