



Volume 22, Issue 5

June, 2021



President
Phyllis Weidman

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

. If you were not there for the May gathering at Josh's garden, you missed a great time. The weather was iffy, but we sat in the garage and by the time I was done talking the rain had stopped. There were new members and not so new members present all eager to be out in a garden talking hostas.

Josh's garden has grown up and it was a pleasure to see how proud he was. It is so much fun to show off your garden to people who understand the work involved in making it beautiful. Unfortunately, he will be leaving the area with a new job so we will miss him and his garden. Thanks to Josh and Adam for letting us visit. We wish you well.

June in the garden can be fun because the heat has not come. I think 85+ is hot but for St. Louis the heat is still to come. It is time to put down slug bait again, prune away the frozen leaves, move a hosta or two and pull weeds.

Time too for the June meeting. Melinda Ligon lives in the Compton Heights Neighborhood of St. Louis. If you have never been to this area this would be a good time to visit. Compton Heights, located east of Grand near Tower Grove Park, is part of the history of our city. Elegant old homes and beautiful yards will make you think you have stepped back in time. So find a hosta friend and come see a beautiful and interesting city garden.

Phyllis

2021 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 20	Garden Walk/Meeting 1:30 PM, Home of Melinda Ligon
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

June 20 1:30 PM. Garden Walk

Home of Melinda Ligon
3080 Hawthorne Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63104
314-749-7307

For our June meeting and garden visit, Melinda Ligon has graciously invited us to her part of the world. Melinda wrote this description of her neighborhood. "Compton Heights, located on the near Southside of the City of St. Louis in the shadow of the great water tower of Reservoir Park, is one of the earliest planned residential developments of the American 19th century. Laid out in 1889 in accordance with a plan that



Compton Water Tower

viewed nature as neighbor and not as an enemy to be subjugated by some rectilinear grid, its wide setbacks and curving streets create remarkable vistas, which are punctuated by more than 200 homes of extraordinary and varied interest. The entire neighborhood is a local historic district."

We will meet at Melinda's Hawthorne Blvd home. Street parking is plentiful. Her shady front yard is home to Melinda's hosta collection. The side and back portions of her yard are densely planted with sun-lovers, some of which you can identify, others not so much. In summer, the front is cool and refreshing while the back is colorful and a haven for butterflies and other pollinators.

While Melinda's garden is small, there is a nice patio in the back that will accommodate some seating. Melinda plans to have lemonade, water and some snacks available. After the meeting we are free to wander the two to three blocks that comprise the neighborhood and experience the varied vegetation and manicured lawns flourishing under the towering trees. This area of St. Louis comprises some lovely architecturally stunning turn of the century homes. Unfortunately, the Compton Hill Park water tower, built in 1889 and located only two blocks away, is currently closed to visits.

May Meeting and Garden Walk

Home of Josh Jagger and Adam Leigh

St. Louis County lifted its mask requirements just before our May meeting. How wonderful it was to be together and to meet many of our newer members.

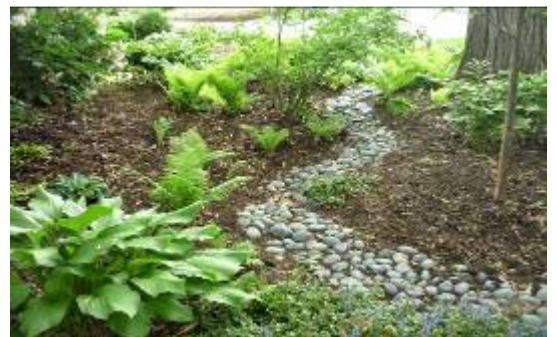
Josh's garden is indeed a labor of love as attested to by the large red heart affixed to one of his tall shade trees. The design and execution are Josh's purview. Adam claims to be the grass cutter. A beautiful 'Rising Sun' golden redbud anchors the border along the back fence.

Like many of us, Josh started with a green, a gold, a blue and a green and white hosta. Each year he would divide his plants and repeat his design the length of his back yard. In the space between the back fence and the hostas he filled with large ferns. The repetition of a variegated hosta and the ferns draws the eye along and into his beds. Rivers of smooth pebbles meander through his beds giving the garden an oriental feel.

Josh said he found having just hostas and ferns boring, so he started adding other companion plants. Heuchera, Solomon seal, ajuga and lily of the valley are now sharing space with the hostas. Josh and Adam have pruned wild honeysuckle so that it grows in the form of an understory tree providing the light shade that hostas love.

Sadly we must bid adieu to Josh and Adam. Josh has accepted a transfer by his company to a location near Miami Florida. Gardening is in his blood so he's apt to continue growing plants, just not hostas.

Thank you for opening your garden for our enjoyment. We all wish you success in this next step in your career.



Josh Jagger (right) and Adam Leigh talk with Jolly Ann Whitener and Marian Murphy.

May Meeting and Garden Walk Dividing a potted hosta



Society President Phyllis Weidman used *H. 'Mango Salsa'* as her demonstration plant. Spring is a nice time to divide hostas as the roots don't start growing until the leaves have completely unfurled. This hosta had been in this pot for approximately seven years and was becoming root-bound.

After removing the plant from its pot, Phyllis began by brushing loose soil from around the roots. If you buy a potted hosta or receive one from someone you don't know well, Phyllis recommended removing all soil so not to introduce "jumping worms" into your garden. Phyllis gently twisted parts of the root ball back and forth, teasing the small roots apart, removing the soil embedded around the roots and then pulling the ball into pieces.



Sometimes it is necessary to cut through some of the roots or the crown. Do this with a sharp knife. But remember to clean your tool with a bleach solution between plants to avoid cross contamination of any bacteria that might be present. A great tip from Phyllis was to simply spray your blade with Lysol. That's much faster than mixing a batch of bleach water and just as effective.

Phyllis separated her pot of 'Mango Salsa' into five divisions which were given to five lucky members. Each of these divisions contained several eyes. You could separate this plant into many more divisions if you wished - your choice.

Did You See! Garden of Janelle Criscione

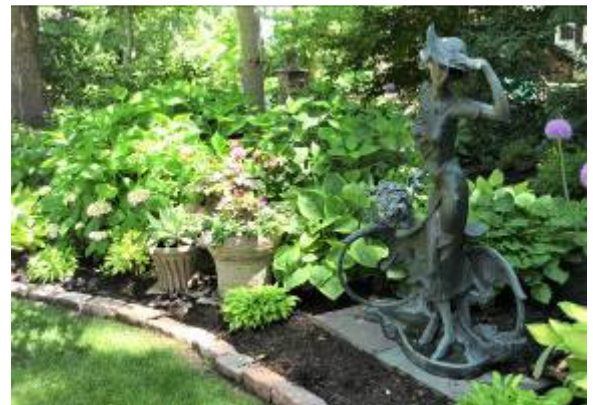
Featured in the May 2021 issue of ***St. Louis Homes and Lifestyles*** is the serene garden of Janelle Criscione. This was one of the gardens featured during the 2016 AHS Convention.

An expanse of green grass draws one to Janelle's home which is surrounded on three sides by shady beds. Nestled under the canape of numerous mature oaks, ginkos, Japanese maples, conifers and other shade trees are hostas, hydrangeas, ferns, Itoh peonies, heuchera and other shade lovers. In sunnier areas look for Janelle's thriving crop of garlic.

Peeping out from the hosta leaves are giant mushrooms, curious rabbits and winsome ladies, part of Janelle's collection of landscape sculpture amassed during the past 25 years. Janelle's first project was to build a dry creek to solve a drainage problem in the backyard. After this came berms populated with hostas.

Nestled in a corner of the back yard is a little garden house where Janelle's late husband spent many a quiet afternoon reading. It started as a potting shed but became a retreat when air conditioning, heat and a slate floor were added. Nearby is an old chicken coop, complete with beveled windows, which now serves as the potting shed.

In the article Janelle lauds the "sense of renewal" gardening provides. "When you plant something in the fall and it comes up in the spring, it makes you know the world is good. There is a spiritual thing about a garden. I think you know that God is there because of the garden."



Did You See! Garden of Gene Pulliam

The May/June 2021 issue of *DesignSTL* magazine featured the garden of member Gene Pulliam. The cover photo shows the front of Gene's Spanish style Glendale home.

When Gene moved here in 2017 his back yard was a blank slate – a red brick patio and lots of overgrown grass. A self-proclaimed country kid, he vowed to transform the space.

His garden is mostly evergreens and wildflowers, but now that he has joined our society hostas have joined the mix. Gene states that “once the garden begins to bloom in May, there's something new blooming all the way until fall.” In winter, Gene strings holiday lights across the patio to add interest when most of the plants are dormant.

In summer Gene's yard is a haven for pollinators. The annuals planted in the galvanized tub, anchored by tropical orange cannas, are especially attractive to butterflies, bees and hummingbirds. The curvy concrete bench, besides being a delightful place to sit, serves as a focal point in the yard.

Gene's gardening philosophy is “Make it your own. Keep it simple but go with things that make you feel good. If you don't like what you plant, don't be afraid to rip it out and do it again.”

DesignSTL magazine is a publication of *STL Magazine* and can be found in area supermarkets and elsewhere. To find the complete article, google: Gene Pulliam DesignSTL.



photo by Carmen Troesser



photo by Carmen Troesser



photo by Carmen Troesser

What goes in the pot, besides the plant?

Most instructions for planting hostas in containers recommend using potting soil or potting mix instead of garden soil. Why? What is the difference between potting soil and potting mix? The selection of brands and types is overwhelming, so how do I decide what is best?

Do not use soil direct from your garden. Never use anything in a bag labeled garden soil or topsoil. Garden soil is for use when planting in the ground. It is too dense, packs down and becomes hard when dry. It also may contain unwanted weed seeds, bacteria, fungi or bugs.

Look for the word “potting”. The terms “potting soil” and “potting mix” are sometimes used interchangeably. But technically, potting mix is a soilless medium that is sterile, that is, no pathogens exist. A good potting medium is light weight, drains well but also retains the right amount of moisture.

Check the list of ingredients. Most commercial potting mixes contain sphagnum peat moss, organics such as ground tree bark, coir (coconut husks), cotton burr or worm castings and finally perlite or vermiculite. Perlite and vermiculite help aerate the soil so that plants are not too compacted. Vermiculite helps retain water so the soil stays moist longer. Perlite helps promote drainage so the roots don't stay wet too long leading to rot. Bark also helps with aeration and drainage.

Most hosta enthusiast also add a gritty substance to aid drainage. This is especially needed for mini hostas planted in troughs. The gritty material can be poultry grit, Turface or pea gravel. Some form of fertilizer is also usually added, especially to sterile mixes such as Pro-Mix. A top dressing of a slow release fertilizer such as Osmocote or Nutricote is sometimes used.

A good discussion of this topic can be found on the American Hosta Society web-site. : (<http://www.americanhostasociety.org/>). On the AHS home page, click on the “Education” tab. Then click on the topic “Growing Hostas in Containers”.

Because it is so important, I reprint this article each spring.

Be Alert for Southern Blight

Southern Blight is caused by a fungus, *Sclerotium rolfsii*, which attacks hostas at their leaf bases. The fungus overwinters as mustard-seed-sized sclerotia. In warm, humid conditions (that's St. Louis) these round mustard seed looking objects germinate into spreading webs of white mycelia. They look like spider webs around the base of the petioles. This mycelia release oxalic acid that destroy cell walls, causing the leaf to collapse. The mycelia can also produce new sclerotia which remain dormant on leaf debris or in the soil. Thus the cycle can continue if left unchecked.

What to do. Some members drench the plant and surrounding soil with a 10% bleach solution. Some remove and soak the plant. I have used this remedy in the past with some success.

However, I have had excellent results with a fungicide: **Bayer Advanced Disease Control for Roses, Flowers and Shrubs** or **Bayer Advanced All-In-One Rose and Flower Care**. This is a systemic product that controls insects and diseases, while fertilizing the plant. Read the label to make sure one of the active ingredients is **Tebuconazole**. There is no need to lift the plant, just saturate the crown and surrounding soil. I usually wait a couple of weeks, then repeat. I also retreat the plants the following spring regardless of whether or not they display symptoms



**Image by the Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources**

In 2019 they were coming! It's 2021 – they are here!

Having lots of earthworms in our compost piles and garden beds is a good thing. They devour all our kitchen scraps and decaying plant debris to make rich compost. Their tunnels help aerate and loosen our soil. They make great bait for erstwhile fishermen. What's the problem? Well there's a new worm in town that leaves parched earth in its path.

Meet the jumping worm (*Amyntas* spp.), also called crazy worms, Alabama jumpers and snake worms. Jumping

worms look like other earthworms except they are larger, four to eight inches in length and the band around their bodies, called a clitellum, is flat, light in color, smooth and completely encircles the worm. When disturbed they jump, thrash wildly and can even shed their tails in an effort to get away. Thus their common name.

These worms have voracious appetites. They lurk in leaves, mulch and the top layer of organic matter – eating, eating and eating, robbing the soil of all its nutrients. The worms' castings are grainy-looking, hard little pellets. After jumping worms arrive, soil doesn't hold together and instead looks more like coffee grounds. It no longer has the same moisture-retention qualities as before, so the water plants need passes through too quickly. The altered soil is also lacking in nutrients and can very easily erode.

Jumping worms are asexual, not needing a mate to reproduce. If you have one, you will soon have hundreds. They are relatively short-lived, 40 to 60 days, and cannot survive our winter temperatures. However they lay eggs in hard, dark cases called cocoons that resemble crumbs of soil that are extremely difficult to detect. These overwinter and hatch in the spring.

If you find one in your garden, one expert suggests securing it in a plastic zip bag and placing the bag in the sun for an hour or so. They will die quickly and you can then safely throw them away. Studies have shown that heat exposure above 104 degrees Fahrenheit kills the egg cases. Most commercial compost producers heat their products beyond that point, so these products should be safe to use.

This Asian invader has been widely reported in New York, New England, the South Atlantic states and recently in Wisconsin, Northern Illinois and Chicago. As reported in the May 3 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* story by Bryce Gray, they have been confirmed just across the river in Madison County. It is suspected that they are also in St. Clair County. It won't be long before they ford the mighty Mississippi. We must do our part. Don't buy jumping worms, crazy worms, snake worms or Alabama jumpers for bait. They are most likely spread through potting soil or mulch. Check any soil, compost or potted plants purchased to be sure they are free of the worms. Wash garden tools with a 10-percent-bleach solution. Consider shaking off the dirt from all plants obtained from an affected area, washing the roots and then planting the bare roots in your own garden. Another invader we must learn to control.

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St. Louis Hosta Society Membership Information

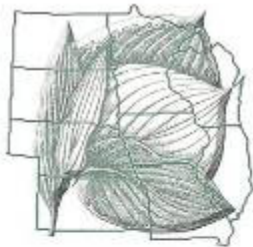
Contact: Dave Poos
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Crestwood, MO 63126
david.poos@att.net

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,
Treasurer
1819 Coventry Dr.
Champaign, IL 61822

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/>