



Shady Notes

Volume 18, Issue 7

September, 2017



**President Diana
Plahn**

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Hostaholics:

We've certainly had a summer with low rainfall and our hostas sure look like it. This is the time of year when our garden looks like something I overcooked a little: slightly brown around the edges, even with irrigation. You can try to fight Mother Nature, but it can sure be an uphill battle.

It's about time to collect any seeds that you might have made from hybridizing your hostas, or collect those seeds that the bees made for you if you want to try your hand growing some hosta seedlings that way. You never know what you might get!

If you want to create any new hosta beds, this is the time to do that. It's also a good time to revitalize your beds by digging all the plants out and reworking the soil while getting rid of tree roots before replanting the plants into the new reworked bed. Plant the hostas that you acquired over the summer and that might still be in their pots, and move any hostas around in beds that have outgrown their space so that the flow of color and texture will be improved.

Our next meeting is on Sunday, September 17th. Same time, same place as usual. Our speaker is Rob Mortko of *Made in the Shade Gardens*. If you want to preorder plants from Rob, I'm sure he will be happy to bring them to St. Louis for you.

Our nominating committee, consisting of Martha LaFata, Janelle Criscione, and Karen Frey, will have a slate of officers for the society to consider. We will have an election at the October meeting.

That's all for now. Hope to see all of you at the meeting in September.

Diana

2017 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 17	Meeting with Speaker Rob Mortko 1:00 PM, Creve Coeur Government Center
October 15	Meeting with Speaker TBA 1:00 PM, Creve Coeur Government Center
November 12	Board Meeting TBA
December 3	Holiday Party TBA – Party at a member's home
June 20-23, 2018	American Hosta Society National Convention Philadelphia, PA
July 12-14, 2018	Midwest Region Hosta Society Convention Peoria, IL



Rob and Sheri Mortko
Photo <http://www.hostaguy.com>

September 17, 1:00 PM
Creve Coeur Government Center

Rob Mortko **'The Future of Hosta'**

Rob Mortko is the owner of *Made in the Shade Gardens*, a home based hosta nursery located in Olathe Kansas. He is also a well-known hybridizer and operates a tissue culture lab at his nursery. Rob's name should be quite familiar to our members. For the last three years, *Made in the Shade Gardens* has been the source for our member's club plants.

In addition to maintaining his own beautiful garden, running a retail hosta business and operating a tissue culture lab, Rob has served as an AHS officer and is currently on the Executive Board of the American Hosta Growers Association. He was also co-chairman of the MRHS Convention held last June in Lenexa Kansas. Rob's articles about 'Hot Hostas' and other hosta related topics appear regularly in *The Hosta Journal*. He also speaks at hosta society meetings across the country.

With the recent closing of two large hosta nurseries and tissue labs, what is the future of this plant we all love? What should we expect? Higher prices? Fewer plants? Rob has some insightful ideas about the path forward.

In case there are still holes in your garden beds, Rob will be bringing plants to sell.



Hostas and their companions, donated by members, were arranged alphabetically. There were small and large, blue, green, yellow and variegated.



There was plenty of time before the auction for members to examine each plant and make their wish lists.



The elder statesman of our society, Chester Wolkowitz with assistance from his wife Pam, described each plant then got the bidding action going.

JULY MEMBER PLANT AUCTION



Janelle Criscione gave Chester a break and tried her hand at auctioneering.



Diana Plahn and Mike Schmitt looked up average retail prices for each hosta as listed in the last **Hosta Finder** available. This gave a starting point for the bidding process.



Melissa Byrd and Martha LaFata noted the bidder's number, the name of the plant and its selling price. At the end of the auction, they tallied purchases and accepted payment.

Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention – June

We were definitely in the 'Land of Ahhhs'. Would you believe Kansas in late June with temperatures in the 70s? Not!! We visited a beautifully maintained nursery and three public places, sat in on educational seminars, admired exhibits in a Hosta Show and ate lots of delicious food. There were private gardens galore, showcasing beautifully grown hostas along borders, massed in beds, situated in tall ceramic urns and short bamboo wrapped pots, even one in a hanging basket. We reconnected with old friends and made some new. A good time was had by all.



'Hosta of the Year' walk in the Livingston garden



Frieda relaxes by the Warren's pond



Bathroom facility in the Warren garden



The Saathoff's gazebo nestled in their woods surrounded by hundreds of gorgeous hostas.



Plant kaleidoscope at the Ward-Meade Botanical Garden



Janelle with Monet at the Monet Garden maintained by the Master Gardeners who co-chaired the convention.



Frieda Wiese, Karen Frey, Pam and Chester Wolkowitz. *Group pictures by Diana Plahn.*



Phyllis Weidman, Janelle Criscione, Martha LaFata, Joan and Dave Poos. In back: Jim Weidman, Craig & Diana Plahn

And there were ribbons – lots and lots of ribbons!

The Hosta Show is one of the highlights of all Regional and National Conventions. Four members of the St. Louis contingent, Diana and Craig Plahn and Phyllis and Jim Weidman, brought entries for The Hosta Show. Entrants selected “perfect” leaves from hostas grown in their own yard, soaked them several days in the bathtub covered with water (improves their sustainability), transported them to Kansas, spent an afternoon cleaning and positioning their leaves in glass bottles, then nervously waited for the judging outcomes.

Diana and Craig won the Best Seedling or Sport Award, while Phyllis and Jim took the Grand Award for best container grown hosta. They all also took home a bushel basket of blue and red ribbons. Below are a few of their ribbon winning entries.



Plahn seedling
Best Seedling or Sport



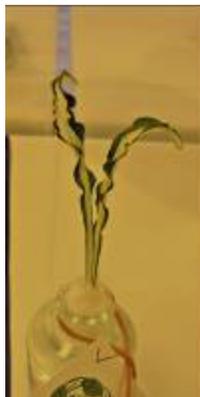
Weidman container – Grand Award
H. 'Dixie Chickadee'



Weidman - Best of Section
H. 'Dick Ward'



Weidman - *H. 'Diva'*
Best of Class



Plahn seedling
Best of Class



Plahn Blue Ribbon
H. 'Virginia Reel'



Weidman Blue Ribbon
H. 'Lakeside Little Gem'

Well Done

Take a Bow



Plahn seedlings - Blue Ribbons



Weidman Blue Ribbon - *H. 'Sno Cone'*

Did You See! Post-Dispatch Garden Contest

Second Place – Karen and Greg Frimel



Photo from Post-Dispatch web-site



Chicken feeder filled with succulents

The photograph that Karen submitted to the Post-Dispatch Great Gardens contest shows the view of her artistically designed backyard from a comfortable seat on her patio. The judges were taken by the chicken feeder that Karen painted black and filled with different succulents. The feeder sits on the low brick wall surrounding the patio area.

Karen's garden is about the unexpected, about the clever use of household items as garden art, about the juxtaposition of form, texture and color. Dozens of ornamental under story trees such as dogwood, redbud, Japanese maples, a tri-color beech and a wolf-eye dogwood supply "bones" to the garden space. Beneath this canopy, the form and texture of native ferns, Solomon seal, astilbe, and of course well-grown hostas complement each other. In sunnier locations daylilies and a vegetable garden hold court.

Don't walk too fast or you will miss her little touches of "found art". I especially like the pot of drill bits, the plant stakes mounted with ornamental glass door knobs and the kitchen cabinet drawers filled with colorful annuals.

Welcome New Members

Pam Belloli of St. Louis, MO
Weldon Cox of St. Louis, MO
Steve Passig of Kirkwood, MO
Wendy Ripes of St. Louis, MO
David Stoecklin of Glen Carbon, IL

It is exciting to have you as new members in our society. Please join us at the September meeting with speaker Rob Mortko. With the closing of several nurseries specializing in hostas, hear what Rob has to say about the future of hostas.

Election Time

Want to be part of the action, work with a fun group of people, set the direction of your hosta society? Now's the time. There are four elected officers who serve two year terms: President, Vice-president, Treasurer and Secretary. The nominating committee is now accepting names of members interested in serving. A slate will be presented to the membership for voting at our October meeting.

There are lots of members willing to help with projects. We just need a bit of leadership. Contact **Martha LaFata** (314-961-7163 or mvelafata@gmail.com), **Janelle Criscione** (314-324-4380 or lambypie@gmail.com) or **Karen Frey** for more information and to submit your name.

Yikes! What's happening to my hostas!



H. 'Alex Summers' is a striking hosta, much more gold than my photograph. Note the upper leaves are solid gold while the lower are normal.



We replanted the reversion in a dark corner of one of our beds. It was much too pretty and vigorous to just throw away.



H. 'Galaxy'. Note the upper leaves resemble one of its parents *sieboldiana* 'Elegans'. We dug up the plant and removed all the dark blue-green reverted divisions.

After the frantic pace of spring and early summer when mulching, edging and weeding consume all our energy, mid and late summer allow time to “smell the roses”. On closer inspection some of our hostas look a bit off.

Whatever has happened to our beautiful *H. 'Alex Summers'*? Half the clump is now all gold. Where has the stunning blue and green variegation that we love so much gone? 'Alex Summers' has decided to either put out a new distinct plant called a sport or revert back to the color and form of one of its parents. It didn't take much research to determine which scenario was most likely.

Reviewing the parentage of the hosta through the AHS Hosta Registry (<http://www.hostaregistrar.org/>), we found that 'Alex Summers' is a sport of *H. 'Gold Regal'*. The golden half of my clump certainly looks like 'Gold Regal'. The coloring, leaf shape and upright form are very similar.

Reversion is a natural process which sometimes occurs in hostas. Some cultivars are more prone to this than others. All parts of the plant are healthy. It is just changing, one division at a time, returning to the make-up of one of its parents. At first it will be one or two eyes, but if left unchecked, the entire plant will eventually revert.

What to do? If the whole plant has changed, it is too late. There is no way to recover the original plant. But if just a part of the plant has reverted, then the solution is to remove the affected part. Trace the leaves back to the base of the plant and cut out the whole section (all the eyes) with a sharp knife. For small and medium hostas, if we have the time, we remove the plant from the ground and pull the divisions apart. We then replant the original piece as we would any new hosta. If the reverted piece is nice, such as the part taken from 'Alex Summers', we save it for use in pots or corners of the garden that don't get as much care and attention.

If a large mature plant, it may be enough just to take off the affected leaves and stems. This is a temporary cosmetic fix. The reverted leaves will grow back.

Fall is the perfect time to perform this surgery. Just do the operation early enough that roots have time to get established before a hard frost occurs.

August and September Hosta Tips

These are excerpts taken from articles **written by Rob Mortko**, our September speaker, which appeared in the Central Illinois Hosta Society newsletters of August and September 2015. These tips are apropos at this time of year.

August is traditionally the hottest month of the year. With all that heat our hostas will really benefit from regular watering. Our goal at this point in the season is to grow the rhizome so that we can reap the benefits next spring.

During the growing season the hosta rhizome (or crown) is building reserves that will be used the following spring. Large amounts of water are also required to replace the natural transpiration of the plant while supporting all the foliage. When we encounter a prolonged spell of hot dry weather, the rhizome will spend its own reserves to support the plant. It's rare that a hosta will wilt, even when the soil is very dry - so we don't get any early warning sign like we do with many plants

Ever wonder why a hosta appears OK at the end of the year, but reappears much smaller and/or less vigorous the following spring, or (even worse) fails to reappear altogether the following spring? This is often the result of a decline in the crown mass the previous summer due to lack of adequate water.

So what to do when we encounter a summer with day upon day of hot temperatures and extended dry spells? Help your hostas manage the stress by watering deeply at least once a week if we don't receive any help from Mother Nature. Optimum moisture for hostas is between one and one and a half inches of water per week during the growing season. This is especially important if your hostas receive significant levels of direct sun exposure. Watering time is also important.

Watering in the morning will help discourage both slugs and fungal activity. When watering blue leafed hostas avoid overhead watering of the leaves which can slowly wear away the glaucous bloom (i.e. the waxy covering that makes a green hosta appear blue). Residual water droplets on any leaf which is followed by sun exposure can also result in leaf burn. Use of soaker hoses and drip irrigation work well in this regard.

Many folks might conclude that hostas can only be planted in the spring because they seem to "disappear" in local nurseries and garden centers by the first of June. Fact is, container grown hostas can be planted any time during the growing season. What's more, by planting now you can gain nearly a full growing season as compared to waiting until next spring. This will be readily apparent next spring as you will most likely have multiple eyes or pips emerge as a result of planting now

Fall is considered the "optimum" time for hosta division as roots can continue to grow and establish themselves until our first killing frost (around the middle of October). Remember hostas never need to be divided as opposed to most perennials that will become less vigorous after 3-5 years if not divided. With hostas it's a choice you make.

To divide hostas it is usually easiest to dig and lift the entire clump. Then use a spade or knife to divide into smaller sections. The key is to retain an adequate root structure for each division. If needed, use a hose to wash away the soil to get a closer look at where you should be making your divisions. When replanting, use a root starter/stimulator solution, but avoid any high nitrogen fertilizer this late in the season. Don't forget the value of good soil prep. Since hostas never need to be divided, you really only get one chance to do a good job of preparing the soil with plenty of organic matter. Never plant that \$5 hosta in a 50 cent hole. Even worse is planting a \$20 hosta in that same 50 cent hole!!!

St. Louis Hosta Society Officials

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St. Louis Hosta Society Membership Information

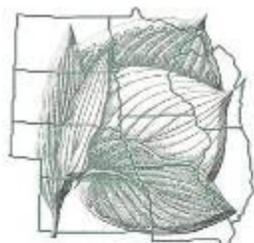
Contact: Melissa Byrd
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mabyrd68@gmail.com

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

Meetings held at **1:00 PM** 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/>