

# Prairie Hosta Herald

## Illinois Prairie Hosta Society

Promoting knowledge and interest in Hostas, fostering the development of new and improved Hosta varieties and encouraging cultivation and usefulness of Hostas in landscapes.

### March Meeting—first one of 2016

**March 29, 6:30-9:00 pm Tool cleaning & sharpening party!**  
**Larry Thurow at Parkland College**  
**(Tony Noel building, Room W111)**

Parkland College Ag instructor and farmer-in-his-personal-life Larry Thurow will lead us through the steps of cleaning and sharpening our tools. You are invited to bring one spade and one pruner. Other than those items, you don't even need to bring a file: all sharpening tools will be supplied. Remember, all tool need to be cleaned before bringing them to the session – trust me, Larry does not want to see a spade with dirt caked on it.

The Tony Noel building is on the west side of the campus. Enter from the Duncan Road side of the campus. At the stop sign turn left and the building will be on your left. Enter the parking lot and entry is the east door near the north side of the building, parking is on the east side (this is where we have meetings in past years).

\*\*\*\*However, please do bring your favorite cookies! All work and no pleasure would make us dirty and dull. Free to IPHS members, \$5 for all others--or, join us (we love new members!).

#### IPHS Membership

Single membership and Family membership is \$15 per year.

Monthly meeting, March to September

Contact:

Carol McClure, 1413 S. Western Ave, Champaign, IL 61821

Check out our Web Site:

<http://www.illinoisprairiehostasociety.com>

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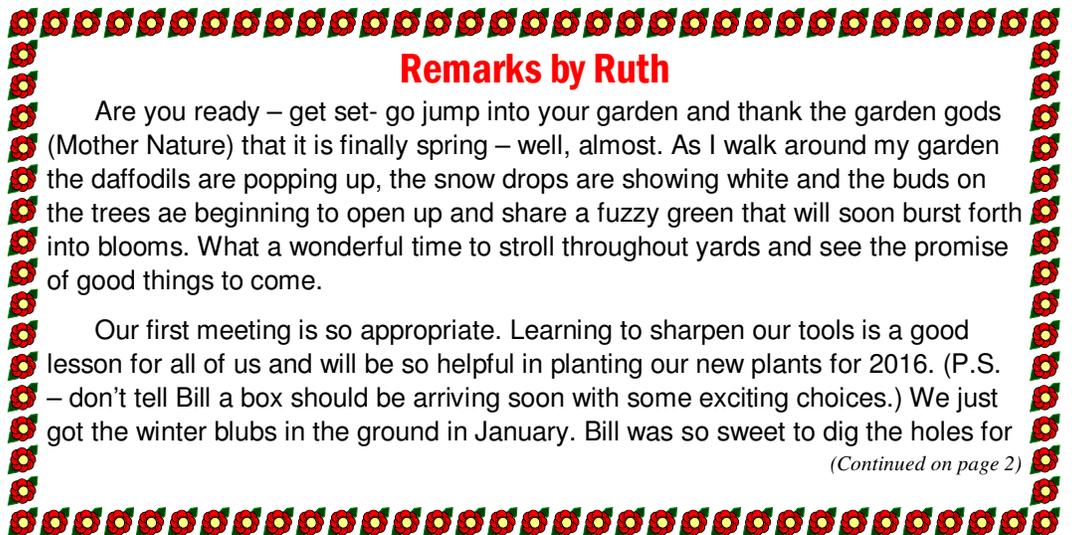
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### Remarks by Ruth

Are you ready – get set- go jump into your garden and thank the garden gods (Mother Nature) that it is finally spring – well, almost. As I walk around my garden the daffodils are popping up, the snow drops are showing white and the buds on the trees ae beginning to open up and share a fuzzy green that will soon burst forth into blooms. What a wonderful time to stroll throughout yards and see the promise of good things to come.

Our first meeting is so appropriate. Learning to sharpen our tools is a good lesson for all of us and will be so helpful in planting our new plants for 2016. (P.S. – don't tell Bill a box should be arriving soon with some exciting choices.) We just got the winter blubs in the ground in January. Bill was so sweet to dig the holes for

*(Continued on page 2)*



## Officers and Committees

### Officers for 2016

**President—Ruth Walker**  
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 Newsletter—Rick Schroeder  
 Philanthropic—Susan Weber  
 Plant Raffle—Liza Weber  
 Annual Plant Sale—Rick Schroeder  
 Publicity— Barb Schroeder  
 Annual Trip—Rick Schroeder

## 2016 Meeting Schedule

The following dates are planned for our 2016 meeting. Some will note time/location but full meeting information may not be available at this time.

**April 17th—U of I Extension Office—Mike Weber on Hosta Species**

**May 21st—Jim & Holly O'Donnell, St. Anne, then visit Sunrise Nursery.**

**June 16th to 19th—AHS Convention in St. Louis**

**June 18th—C-U Master Gardener Garden Walk**

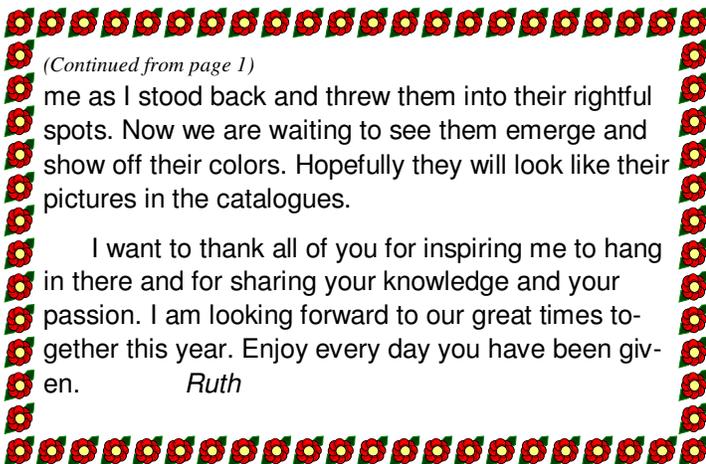
**June 26th—Mary Ann Metz's—potluck and hosta landscape design & container gardening.**

**July 7th to 9th—MRHS Convention here I Champaign.**

**July 23rd—Carol McClure home—Garden Art by Diann Thoma**

**August 28th— Location TBA —program TBA**

**September 25th—1:00 to 4:00 Annual Meeting and Dinner, Urbana Country Club—program TBA**



*(Continued from page 1)*

me as I stood back and threw them into their rightful spots. Now we are waiting to see them emerge and show off their colors. Hopefully they will look like their pictures in the catalogues.

I want to thank all of you for inspiring me to hang in there and for sharing your knowledge and your passion. I am looking forward to our great times together this year. Enjoy every day you have been given.  
*Ruth*

## Welcome New Members

We welcome the following new members to IPHS:

For new members, when you attend your first meeting check with Carol McClure to pick up your Hosta Adventure published by the American Hosta Society.

Brenda & Michael Larson, 1 Larson Lane, Westville, IL



### H. 'Curley "Fries" – 2016 Hosta of the Year

If you don't have this one in your garden you should. Bob Solberg introduced this hosta at the 2008 St. Louis convention and it has been a hit ever since. This small hosta will grow to about 8 inches wide and spread to at least one foot, or more. The leaves are rippled, bright chartreuse green in the spring and will be 6 inches long but only about 1 inch wide at the most. It is a great container plant as it wants to droop over the edge. Each year the Hosta Growers Association names a plant that grows well, is reasonable in price, will grow about anyplace and is well loved in the hosta world. Remember, you need 'Curley Fries' in your garden.

## Avoiding Spring Frost Damage

*by Ray Rodgers, Central Illinois Hosta Society*

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

**MIDWEST  
REGIONAL HOSTA  
SOCIETY  
2016 CONVENTION  
JULY 7<sup>TH</sup> TO 9<sup>TH</sup>.  
CHAMPAIGN, IL**

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- 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 dorman-

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Hosta Meetings and Conventions—2016 +

**Be sure to put these dates on your calendar so you can attend as these conventions are close to us.**

**The 2016 AHS Convention will be in St. Louis June 15th to 18th. This is the same weekend as the Master Gardener Garden Walk but we hope that some of you that are not involved with the walk can attend and visit some outstanding gardens. Remember the hosta garden in the U of I Arboretum will be on the walk.**

**The MRHS 2016 Convention is here in C-U July 7 to the 9th. In addition to seminars the seed growers group will feature a display of new hostas being developed for future sales. Watch for separate emails to members with updates and registration form.**

**In 2017 the AHS convention will be in Indianapolis, June 7-11 and MRHS 2017 in Kansas City.**

## American Hosta Society

For \$30 per year (\$34 for family) you can join the American Hosta Society because it gives you –

\* The bi-yearly publication, THE HOSTA JOURNAL, probably one of the best publications you will receive about hostas. In addition, there is a yearly On-Line Journal for members.

\* An opportunity to attend national meetings and conventions which offer educational and scientific presentations, garden tours, judge's clinics, buy plants from hosts dealers or the auction and a chance to see the latest and best hosta in the hosta show.



To learn more and join go to: [www.americanhostasociety.org](http://www.americanhostasociety.org) where you will find an application and mail it to the Membership Secretary listed.

**Our IPHS Friends—be sure to visit them**



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cy. 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.

## Planting Bare Root Hostas

Hostas from many hosta societies' early spring sales will arrive bare root. Vendors ship them this way to save postage.

Plant the bare root hostas right away. Keep them wet until you can get them in a pot. Bob Solberg, hosta breeder, in his newsletter, *The Green Hill Gossip*, says that they will appreciate a soaking in a bucket of water several hours to rehydrate them and wake them up. This will help them since they are young and tender

Use a small (commercial) one gallon pot and untangle the roots before planting in soil that will drain well.

Larry Tucker, from the Mid-South Hosta Society, suggests using potting soil and adding very finely chopped pine bark to improve drainage. Then give the hostas a top dressing of fertilizer to give them a jump start. Osmocote is good for this but avoid the crown. They will like some morning sun and shade later in the day. These young hostas need to be kept well-watered, especially over our hot summer.

Check frequently, as pots will quickly dry out in most climates. Some may get pot bound – they won't mind it – so wait until next year to plant them in the ground or to up-pot them.

From the fall newsletter of the Tri State Hosta Society - Reprinted from the Mid-South Hosta Society newsletter, Hosta Hotline, April 2015

*Editor: We recently learned at the MRHS Winter Conference of the invasive worm called the "jumping worm" which has been found in Wisconsin and two counties in northern Illinois. The worm will destroy our wonderful worms plus remove all of the nutrients from the soil thus leaving the area bare of any vegetation. The recommendation at this time is any plants purchased either from a mail order source or visit to a greenhouse be bare rooted before you bring them home.*

## Molted Hostas—Are They Sick or super

by David Teager, Ph.D.

[IPHS Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the newsletter of the Delaware Valley Hosta Society and was reprinted by the Tri State Hosta Society. Obviously a great deal of research went into the writing of this article, and whether you agree with the author's observations or not, we felt it was worthy of being reprinted with the permission of the author.]

Sometime in the time of Y2K, hosta-centered internet chat forums and email chains began buzzing with commentary on the first pictures of a new kind of hosta, exemplified by *H. 'Leopard Frog'* (G. R. Goodwin, 2000, a "sport" of 'Little Aurora') and 'Eternal Father' (J. Willets, 1999, a "sport" of 'Sun Power'). These hostas weren't just streaky (like the coveted streaked breeding hostas) or misty (like the delicious 'Spilt Milk'); they were downright splotchy, like an aucuba leaf on a hosta! The hosta world

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was divided: were these new hostas something we wanted in our gardens? It is difficult to assess the division in hind-sight, but it seemed that there were many people at the time who did.

Soon, of course, more such “sports” appeared, and we know the rest of the sad story. These intriguing leaves were not normal, but were showing the symptoms of a new virus, later labeled as *Hosta Virus X* (HVX). And while some plant viruses are relatively benign, HVX was virulent, easily transferred to other cultivars by transfer of sap between wounded leaves or roots (as could happen in field harvesting or pruning). H. ‘Sum and Substance’, at the time taking the gardening world by storm, was sadly one of those most frequently infected.

Still, to some this mottled patterning was desirable (leaving aside those who permit HVX in their gardens because they “like” the look). Hosta people, though, are clever folk. Just as modern breeders of tulips eventually found breeding lines leading to “flame” patterned blooms—where the coveted broken colors of the tulipomania craze were caused by a mosaic virus—perhaps the productive breeders and sport spotters of the hosta world would discover or develop non-virused hostas with the desired coloration.

In the fall of 2014 and winter of 2015, a minor buzz arose with the upload of a picture to the AHS Facebook page of H. ‘Kiwi Forest’ (B. Sligh, 1999). Rick Goode-nough’s picture shows a well-grown Tokudama-type plant in springtime; the mottling is said to fade over the season to result in an all-green, somewhat glaucous, plant. From ten feet away in springtime, though, it would be difficult not to see the hosta and think: what’s up with that! Indeed, some commenters thought “sick,” while others thought “super” and raised the question where they could get it or others like it.

An internet investigation shows that ‘Kiwi Forest’ belongs to a small group of hostas listed on Don Rawson’s “The Hosta Lists” website under “Mottled-leaved Hostas.” (See boxed list on page 9 and note that some on this list are likely infected with HVX.) Rick later uploaded a picture of ‘Wolcott’ (D. Stone/Piedmont Gardens, 1982), also on the Rawson list: a *Sieboldiana*-type seed-ling with similar coloration to ‘Kiwi Forest’, again turning all-green by summer. Most, but not all, of the mottled hostas exhibit the same color change. This is a key difference from HVX-infected plants, which will show the same broken

coloration all year long, as well as a distinctive “collapsed tissue” effect in affected regions.

Notice that while Barry Sligh’s ‘Kiwi Forest’ was registered in the beginning of the HVX era (and Barry later registered some suspect infected plants with this coloration, such as ‘Kiwi Dreadlocks’), ‘Wolcott’ has been around even longer. Looking deeper into Don Rawson’s list of mottled hostas (see box), one sees that quite a number of these plants have been around a long time. These plants remain rare, likely because this variegation pattern is not well-expressed in the tissue culture propagation process. Rare, but not necessarily expensive: the box shows prices for listed cultivars in Steven Greene’s *Hosta Finder* (2015).

As well, based on reviewing the immensely helpful *MyHostas.be* database, it would seem that these truly mottled hostas do not readily pass on this trait to their seedlings. Only ‘Cynthia’ seems to have produced any mottled progeny at all, with Ron Lysne finding ‘Alliteration’ in a back-cross of ‘Cynthia’ x [‘Cynthia’ x ‘Piedmont Gold’]. This seems to leave the breeder looking for an exceptionally rare mutation, and the buyer desirous of such hostas with few choices, limited to originator’s stock divisions.

This (in the author’s opinion) is not a bad thing for the hosta world. For fifteen years we have been battling HVX, and educating growers and buyers about the disease is a significant part of that battle. If one of the mottled hostas successfully yielded to tissue culture propagation, these might trickle down from the specialty nursery catalogs to the regional or local garden centers, those same centers where we have worked so hard to purge stock of virus-infected ‘Blue Cadet’, ‘Sum and Substance’, et al., which look—one cannot deny—no less interesting than that well-grown ‘Wolcott’. Many of us have developed a conditioned response to this mottled look, and it isn’t a favorable one. Others, with no less (and perhaps more) concern for the health of their garden plants, can overcome this response and find a place for this variant variegation in their gardens.

And so the mottled hosta remains a curiosity. You may question the sanity of any gardener who chooses to grow a hosta that looks, well, sick (to you). Or you may think this is super, and wish to have such an unusual hosta in your collection, given the questions that garden visitors are likely to ask. Or you fall somewhere in-between: informed but neither re-pulsed nor intrigued. Beauty is, indeed, in the eye of the beholder.

## *Illinois Prairie Hosta Society*

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Check us out on Facebook and we  
are on the Web at:  
[http://  
www.illinoisprairiehostasociety.com](http://www.illinoisprairiehostasociety.com)

### **Remarks by Rick**

Where has the time gone? It has been 12 years since we formed this society doing so in the summer of 2004. 2016 will be a busy year for our group with the hosta garden being a part of the Master Gardener Garden Walk in June and the MRHS Convention in July.

This spring Susan Weber will be organizing several work session to clean up the garden and mulch the area prior to the garden walk. Member and Master Gardener Tony Soskin is co-chair with Bill Ford for the Arboretum Hosta Garden and the Japan House garden area. If you are a Master Gardener and have not signed up to help during the garden walk you need to contact Tony and become part of Tony/Bill team, remember, you get to talk about our garden to visitors and get your required volunteer hours.

Susan Weber has set Tuesday, April 12<sup>th</sup> as our first cleanup session. We will start around 9:30 AM and will remove tree limbs and leaves from the garden. Should we have rain that day we will plan the following day, the 13<sup>th</sup> at the same time, or rain both days we will wait until Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup>. Bring your rakes and some lawn bags. Barb will send out an announcement the week prior to the session.

Diann Thoma has a great program to start out the season. March is usually a cool or rainy meeting if we were outside so what a better use of time than to get your garden tools cleaned (you do that before bringing to the meeting) and sharpened and learn the methods to do the rest of your tools. We all put that task off; at least I know that I do. Also note her request for cookies (I like chocolate chip).

Remember, we will be hosting the Midwest Regional Hosta Society convention this July. Mike and I are the garden tour "committee" and we have contacted some of you to volunteer to have your garden open. If you have agreed we really appreciate opening your garden to visitors. This will be a "driving" convention on Friday and Saturday mornings so you will not have some 200 hosta lovers at one time in the yard. So if you have not volunteered your garden and would like to, contact either of us to discuss the plans for the tours.

Rick

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