

History of the Illinois Prairie Hosta Society

In 2004, Rick and Barbara Schroeder sent letters to members of the American Hosta Society, who were within driving distance of Champaign, asking them if they were interested in starting a hosta society. Eighteen members joined the Schroeder's at their home in June for the first of two organizational meetings at which the bylaws were written, officers were elected, and plans for a newsletter were made. In August, 2004, the society was opened to all people interested in hosta in the surrounding area. In the first five months, the society grew to over 50 members.

In 2005, enthusiasm increased. The group had regular meetings with speakers and garden visits. They held the first plant auction, later turning that fundraiser into a community plant sale every May. The first bus trip was to Indianapolis where they toured gardens and shopped. The website was started, and the speaker at IPHS's first annual banquet was Roy Klehm from Song Sparrow Farm and Nursery. By the end of 2005, the society had grown to more than 90 members.

2006 brought another bus trip, this time to Peoria, Illinois. The annual banquet in October featured hosta hybridizer Bob Solberg. IPHS started a hosta garden project at Allerton Park, the former estate of Robert Allerton near Monticello, Illinois, now owned and operated by the University of Illinois. Over 100 plants, including hosta were planted that year, and IPHS members still clean and add to that garden 2 times per year so that visitors can enjoy the hosta display. Each year, we have continued to enjoy annual bus trips, visits to members' gardens and local nurseries, and to attend not only our local meetings, but also regional and national meetings. In 2009, we hosted the Midwest Regional Hosta Convention.

In 2010, we agreed to work with the University of Illinois to create a hosta display area in the U of I Arboretum. In the fall of 2010, IPHS members prepared beds, and we began planting in 2011. The current garden contains around 160 total hosta cultivars and over one hundred companion plants. Many of the hosta located in the Hosta Garden at the Arboretum came from the originator stock of IPHS members. Companion plants were donated both by the Arboretum, and by IPHS members.

Additional important contributors to the garden include Mark Zilis (M.S. Horticulture), who graduated from the University of Illinois in 1979 specializing in plant tissue cultivars, and Van Wade for contributing fine hostas to our collection. Mark, owner of Q&Z Nurseries in Rochelle, IL, completed our collection of the Hosta of the Year winners. Van, owner of Wade and Gatton Nurseries in Belleview, OH, contributed *H.*'Helen Doriot'. *H.*'Helen Doriot' was an important addition to the garden because around 1976, while Mark was still a student, the University of Illinois and Professor Martin M. Meyer Jr. were experimenting with tissue culture of hostas using flower buds; this experimentation resulted in the start of the *Hosta* tissue culture business. The hosta used in the experiments was *H.*'Helen Doriot'.

Our goal for 2014 is to achieve National Display status for the Hosta Garden at the University of Illinois. Arboretum.

Committee members for Allerton Park and University of Illinois Arboretum Gardens are: Deb Guardia, Mary Ann Metz, Karen Meyer, and Susan Weber. With the help of and donations from IPHS members, the gardens will continue to grow and be maintained well into the future.

Presidents of the Illinois Prairie Hosta Society

2004 – 2008	Barbara Schroeder
2009 – 2010	Susan Weber
2011 – 2012	Siska Kallio
2012 – 2016	Ruth Walker
2017 – 2018	Rick Schroeder
2019 – 2022	Mike Weber