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# Heartland Hosta & Shade Plant Society

## President's Message

The rain could not dampen the spirits of those who ventured out for the Garden Party at Janice Turner's beautiful yard! Wide sweeping paths between lovely plantings of hostas, ferns and other perennials accented with a few well placed pieces of garden art delighted the visitors.

We're looking forward to our Autumn meeting on September 13, 2014 at the Faith Lutheran Church, 67th & Roe. We are fortunate to have Larry Tucker coming to present an interesting lecture, "Confessions of a Hostaholic; How Antiques and Antics Make Gardening Fun". The club will furnish meat, drinks and table service, so bring a dish to share and enjoy a very informative speaker, a delicious lunch and great fellowship with fellow hostaholics!

The Plant Sale was a great success! We were able to partner with Colonial Nursery in Blue Springs, who provided us with safe space to raise plants for sale. A huge thanks to them!

There are a few nice plants remaining that will be for sale at the meeting, as well as some lovely ferns. Be sure to check them out. September is a great time to plant a few more hostas to be established and ready to grow next Spring! Plan to shop!!!

Our first year planting and maintaining a Hosta garden at Loose Park has resulted in a garden that is looking great! That is in large part due to the diligent and watchful eyes of Pam Hoelzel and Tom Hand who are giving generously of their time to assure success there.

There are going to be a few new faces on the Board. Stephanie Hamil has agreed to replace Nancy Erwine as the Membership Chair, Sandy Harris and Leslie Milby are replacing Carmen Martinache as Hospitality Chair and Cady Pembroke is replacing Penny Balfour as Newsletter Editor. We're so happy to welcome Stephanie, Sandy, Leslie and Cady, while we will miss Nancy, Carmen and Penny who have worked so hard to make the HH&SPS run so smoothly! Keith Wheeler will take Director/Plant Sales. I want to thank Andy and Annella Kuhar who have continued to stay active and who have helped out so much.

*Gwen*

## Hosta Meeting Saturday, September 13th

Faith Lutheran Church, 67th & Roe Prairie Village, KS

Hospitality at 9 AM with Meeting at 10 AM. Mr. Tucker's program to follow.

Potluck following the meeting. Club furnishes meat, drink and tableware.

Please bring a dish to share! There will be door prizes and hostas and ferns for sale. Guests are always welcome! Info – Gwen 816-213-0598



## Guest speaker at our fall meeting: Larry Tucker

Topic: **Confessions of a Hostaholic**  
*How Antiques and Antics Have Made Gardening Fun*

Larry was a newspaper editor for 50 years, retiring in 2003 from The Commercial Appeal in Memphis. He and his wife Shari just completed a move to Memphis, TN. Of his 300+ hostas, his favorite is 'Elvis Lives' which has "blue suede leaves."

## *The Obsessed Gardener*

*By Phil Alley*

So many of us in our shade plant club are afflicted with this anomaly; we are obsessive. What are the symptoms of this affliction? We are focused like a laser beam to construct the perfect garden. We are often the "cup half empty" type in that a diminishing hosta causes us more distress than a burgeoning hosta gives us pleasure. Our intention to enjoy a blissful garden walk is preempted by the endless task of removing every unwanted weed. The placement and orientation of our plant tags are never quite right to compliment the beauty of their namesake. Slug holes, broken leaves, and desiccated edges glare like a spotlight on a stage performer. The perfect garden is a laudable goal that we obsessive types take seriously. In this magic pursuit for perfection what are the two most important factors that can move us in the direction of the "utopiagarden?"

### **Soil amendment**

Most gardeners in the Kansas City area face the problem of soil compaction. Our native plants have evolved with this soil type and have characteristics well adapted to the medium. However, most shade plant folks enjoy many of the non-indigenous varieties such as hostas. Clay soil presents significant challenges to the hosta and other accoutrement plants.

- The hosta needs a well-drained medium particularly in winter. The fine particles in clay inhibit good drainage and can cause crown rot.
- Hosta roots need oxygen. Compact clay creates an impermeable layer of soil that inhibits both water and oxygen from reaching the root system. During dry weather this compaction also prevents good root penetration.
- Clay is eroded rock. While it is full of minerals that are good for hosta health, it is not rich in the organic microorganisms that are essential.
- Because clay lacks the loose particles that enable expansion and contraction of the soil, our winter freeze and thaw cycles tend to heave our plants right out of the ground, damaging the root system. Undetected, death or diminution is certain to follow.

With the bad comes the good

- Clay does have essential minerals (nutrient rich) that the so-called loamy soils do not. The reason for this is that the particles that make up clay soil are negatively charged. They attract and pick up positively charged particles, such as calcium, potassium, and magnesium.
- Clay retains moisture. Clay soil stays wet longer than loose, sandy soil. Having water available at the roots is a good thing during the growing season.

*The Obsessed Gardner cont...*

To achieve the best of both worlds our soil requires amendments. Amendments retain the good qualities of clay and negate the bad. We cannot eliminate the clay but we can alter the ratio of clay to organics in our garden. For Gayle and I this means the addition of anything to loosen up the soil. We harvest about three acres of leaves each fall, shred them with our motorized leaf shredder, and stage this enormous pile of matter for over a year to become compost. In addition we utilize a tractor driven chipper/shredder to render downed limbs and unwanted saplings into garden mulch. A layer of mulch keeps the plant roots cooler in summer, warmer in winter, retains moisture, and ultimately becomes compost. Saw dust from our saw mill, ash from our wood stoves, and vegetable matter from the kitchen also contribute to our compost. The application of all this organic matter to the surface of our gardens encourages worm activity. The worms (and voles, and moles) penetrate the clay below and ultimately establish a more even distribution of loose, loamy-like soil. Additionally, all of our new plants get a healthy application of compost from the “get go.”

**Water**

All the soil amendment in the world will not compensate for inadequate water. Our native plants have evolved in the plains, a region familiar with extended periods of drought. However, many of the shade plants we love to grow flourish best with cooler temperatures and copious rainfall. Therefore, we have a problem. Gayle and I embarked on the risky enterprise of a deep irrigation well. Several thousands of dollars later we learned the lesson that salt water and beautiful, healthy plants are incompatible. Today, we utilize a shallow well that harvests our creek water. I am convinced that the difference between a good garden and an outstanding garden is governed by adequate water at the right time. Nothing is more essential than not just some water, but lots of water. We use rotor type sprinkler heads utilizing about 75 independent heads to cover our gardens. If the creek is flowing, we are irrigating.

For every advantage in life there is a disadvantage. It is this law that keeps us humble. Lots of “critters” also love water and good rich earth. The mole is attracted to the grubs and the vole utilizes the mole tunnels as a convenient conduit to dine on hosta crowns. Slugs, snails, and fungus dearly love a wet environment as they subsist on our favorite plants. Deer, squirrel, and rabbits crave succulent foliage when everything else in their environment is dry and crispy. Compromise always rules the day: water as infrequently as possible but when you do water, water deep. The foliage has time to dry out and the roots grow down and not up.

For you unrepentant, obsessive, perfectionistic gardeners: Remember that we get out of life exactly what we put into it (the law of conservation of energy). All of this fretting and fussing with our gardens is the energy that we give it. In that proportion we will receive unbridled pleasure and satisfaction as we walk our gardens at the end of the day. Still, what may be a contradiction to the law, the rewards seems greater than the investment. An engineering evaluation is in order to better understand this phenomenon.

Phil Alley, Pleasant Hill, MO

## ~ 2015 ~ Calendar of Events

March 21st  
Spring Meeting  
Faith Lutheran  
Church

May 9th  
Plant Sale  
Faith Lutheran  
Church

June 6th  
Garden Party  
TBA

September 19th  
Fall Meeting  
Faith Lutheran  
Church

Midwest  
Region  
Convention  
Dubuque, Iowa  
TBA

June  
18th - 20th  
AHS National  
Convention  
Raleigh, NC





Heartland Hosta & Shade Plant Society  
Stephanie Hamill  
9630 State Line  
Leawood, KS 66206

## Heartland Hosta & Shade Plant Society Membership and Renewal Form

*Check at the up-coming meeting if your dues are paid in full.*

*Dues are \$10.00 per year or \$25.00 for 3 years.*

Check One: NEW MEMBER  / RENEWAL

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Member of Am. Hosta Society?  YES /  NO

Would you like to volunteer?  Hospitality /  Plant Sale /  Other

Is your garden open to visitors?  YES /  NO

Please return this form with your email address even if your dues are paid up to:

Stephanie Hamill • 9630 State Line • Leawood, KS 66206