



Heartland Hosta & Shade Plant Society

SPRING 2008

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President's Message

Hello, everyone! Spring is around the corner. Let's hope freezing weather is over by the end of March!



*Tom Micheletti
President of American
Hosta Society*

Tom Micheletti, President of the American Hosta Society is our special speaker for the March 29th meeting at Faith Lutheran Church, 67th and Roe. He is the past President

of the Midwest Regional Hosta Society. He is also a member of the American Hosta Growers Association and serves on its board as Publicity Director. He founded the Northern Illinois Hosta Society in 1992, and served 4 years as its first president and continues to serve on its board. Tom's topic will be "The Trouble with Hostas".

Tom has over 800 different varieties of Hostas in his one-acre garden in the Chicago area. He sells over 500 varieties

of Hostas via his web site at www.hostapatch.com.

Tom, like most of us, started with the basic green, then the green with white edge and the green with white center, and on and on. We've all discovered that there are multiple sizes, leaf shapes, color combinations and growth habits of hostas.

Looking forward to our annual sale - we have ordered over 50 varieties of hosta, many new and some tried and true. We've also ordered Arisaemas, Caladiums and other shade loving perennials.

Effective this year, we have increased the annual dues to \$10.00 because of increased costs of printing and mailing of the newsletter. Dues also pay the expense of bringing in quality speakers.

We will have green bucks at the meeting, one for each person attending. These can be used at our plant sale in May. The board and I hope to see you at our meeting on March 29th at 9:30 a.m.

Penny

We'll see you at the March 29 meeting, 9:30 a.m. Faith Lutheran Church, 67th & Roe



Keith Wheeler will have Plant Stands for sale at our March 29 meeting.



2008 Events

March 29

Heartland Hosta Spring Meeting
(Faith Lutheran Church)

May 10

Heartland Hosta Annual Plant Sale
(Faith Lutheran Church)

June 11-14

The American Hosta Society National Convention
St. Louis, MO

July 10-12

Midwest Regional Hosta Convention
Schaumburg, Illinois

September 27

Heartland Hosta Fall Meeting
(Faith Lutheran Church)



Avoiding Spring Frost Damage

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 the last week in April. The average last frost date for Kansas City is April 30. Remember last year when the April freeze hit us and many hosta leaves turned to mush and were sickly all summer?

The following article was written by Ray Rodgers, Central Illinois Hosta Society

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*

* 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,

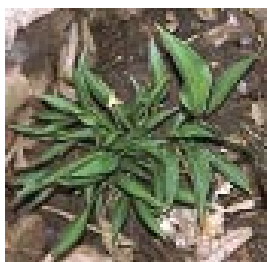
protective measures may reduce the severity, but it is unlikely that they will prevent freeze damage.

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 dormancy. 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.

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.

These are some of the Hostas we'll have at the sale in May.



Itsy Bitsy Spider



Lonesome Dove



My Child Insook



Country Mouse



Heartland Hosta Society Dues

To ensure your continued newsletter mailings, please make sure you're current on dues. If you're not sure, check your mailing address label for the year next to your name. You are paid up through that year. We ask that you prepay at least 2 years dues at a time.

Join the American Hosta Society

The publications alone are worth the annual dues. Visit the AHS website (www.hosta.org) for the latest membership options.

Join the Midwest Regional Hosta Society

The MRHS (including both KS and MO) publishes two newsletters a year, holds an annual Summer Convention and a Winter Scientific Meeting. Dues are only \$10 per year payable to MRHS.

Send dues to:
Scott Hildebrandt
MRHS Treasurer
1020 Redwood Drive
Norwalk, IA 50211

Heartland Hosta & Shade Plant Society
 Penny Balfour, President & Newsletter Editor
 4912 Pawnee Dr.
 Roeland Park, KS 66205

Heartland Hosta and Shade Plant Society Membership and Renewal Form

Your dues are currently paid up through the year noted next to your name on the mailing address label. We ask that all members prepay at least 2 years at a time to minimize the paperwork and bookkeeping. Dues are \$10.00 per year.

Check one... NEW MEMBER RENEWAL

Name	Street Address
City, State, Zip	Home Phone
Business Phone	E-Mail Address
Fax	Member of American Hosta Society?
Is Your Garden Open to Visitors?	Would You Like To Volunteer?

Please return this form with your e-mail address even if your dues are paid up. Return this form and your dues to:

Nancy Erwine
 900 Hillside, Liberty, MO 64068