



The American Hosta Society

Jan 2026

eNewsletter



H. 'Goodness Gracious'

Walters Gardens 2018

(Photo by Mary Vertz)

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President's Message

Chuck Doughty , Holbrook, MA

Looking out onto my garden this cold day in December, I am noticing that this is a great time to see what is missing. I can take advantage of the stark openness and assess where in the garden that adding structure would be an asset to my design. By adding conifers, stone, hardscape, bird attracting shrubs and grasses, I am able to enjoy the design even in the dead of winter.

With the lack of snow in the past, I decided to leave the leaf litter in the beds for added insulation and attack my fall clean up in late winter or early spring. This also provides winter harborage for beneficial insects and then a food source for birds. I can see where plants with colorful stems, berries, and late seed pods add winter interest. I can appreciate the exfoliating bark on the Paperbark Maple, the color of the bark on the *Stewartia pseudocamellia*, the red stems of the red twig dogwood and the horizontal branching of the Pagoda Dogwood. The trees that hold their leaves like oaks, and Quaking Aspen with movement as the wind blows, are also effective. The structure of the deer resistant *Thuja plicata* stands out like an exclamation point.

My assessment shows that I need more colorful red berries as winterberry and witch hazel that blooms from late winter, that I can view from my room in the cozy barn with the fire raging.

Spring of 2026 will have many exciting new cultivars, as hosta hybridizers have been working diligently creating plants that are more fragrant, plants with unique variegation and all sizes, from mini's to giant.

Turning to the hosta news, I must mention that the upcoming events will be upon us quickly.

The online Hosta Auction-January into February

Winter Hosta Symposium-Feb 20-21 in Brookfield, WI

Hosta College-Mar 20-21 in Piqua, OH

AHS National Convention - June 10-13, 2026 – Dublin, Ohio

Dixie Regional-May 28-30 in Huntsville, AL

Midwest Regional Convention-July 9-11 in Madison, WI

Chuck Doughty



Hostas and Associates

Glenn Herold, Cedarburg, WI

Amelanchier, by any other Name

Photos by Glenn Herold

“Ethnobotanists know that the more names a plant has, the greater its cultural importance,” states Robin Wall Kimmerer in her book *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*. Certainly that is true of plants in the genus *Amelanchier*, commonly called serviceberry, sarvis tree, shadbush, Juneberry, shadblow serviceberry, Saskatoon, and others, all of which have some regional or colloquial meaning.

The genus *Amelanchier* consists of up to 30 species, most of which are found in North America. At least one species is native to every state except Hawaii and in every Canadian province. Because of their propensity to naturally hybridize, and their overlapping native ranges, the number of actual species is debatable.

Serviceberry is known by Indigenous Peoples as a calendar plant, as it is an indicator of numerous annual events. It is a gauge to fisherfolk that the shad are running upstream, hence one of its common names. “Serviceberry” comes from an old version of its rose family name, “sorbus,” which became “sarvis” and hence service. The time of serviceberry flowering, usually in April, is a sign that the ground has thawed and thus is soft enough to dig. Prior to backhoes, graves were dug by hand, which was almost impossible in northern areas in the winter. Therefore, many older cemeteries had caves where caskets were stored until spring, when the ground was suitable for digging and services could be said.

Neil Diboll of Prairie Nursery in Westfield, Wisconsin, says that *Amelanchier* is one of our most important keystone plants, native plants that are critical to the health of an ecosystem and the survival of many wildlife species. Its foliage is utilized by 124 species of caterpillars, including the red-spotted purple butterfly and striped hairstreak butterfly, as well as sphinx moths. Deer browse the fruit, and the flowers are a source of early pollen for newly emerging insects. Indigenous Peoples used the fruit in the making of pemmican, an early version of energy bars. Dried berries, along with dried venison or bison, were pounded to a fine powder and then bound with rendered fat. Once solidified, they could be stored and used as an energy source in the winter.

Serviceberry is a four-season interest plant. The white flowers emerge in two-to-four-inch pendulous clusters in spring. Pea-sized red to purple fruit ripen in June, hence another of its common names. The Potawatomi called the fruit *bozakmin*, meaning “best of the berries.” Our daughter, Holly, would concur. When we lived in Peoria, she would compete with the robins for the fruit from the *Amelanchier* we had in our front yard. She even saved enough to make an *Amelanchier* pie from time to time. Seasonal interest does not end there. The fall color can be an exceptional orange to red and in winter the smooth, striped bark demands attention.

Because of the difficulty in identification, many nurseries clump all species under the name *Amelanchier canadensis*, which does exist, but is only native from Maine to South Carolina along the coast in bogs and swamps. Other species prefer well-drained soil. Rainbow Pillar® and Spring Glory® are true cultivars of this tall shrub-like plant. To be sure of what you are getting, it is best to purchase a named cultivar.

‘Cumulus’ and ‘Snowcloud’ are cultivars of *Amelanchier laevis*, the Allegheny serviceberry, which is a Wisconsin native. It matures at 20 to 30 feet and is usually multi-stemmed. ‘Snowcloud’ has a columnar, rather than spreading form. *Amelanchier arborea*, the downy serviceberry, is another Wisconsin native. It is usually found on the edges of woods, in either part shade or full sun. Because of the overlapping native ranges of these two species, naturally forming cultivars exist, and are known as *Amelanchier x grandiflora*, the apple serviceberry. Many cultivars have been selected from this hybrid for it produces larger flowers and is more upright branching. ‘Autumn Brilliance’ is a readily available cultivar that matures at 20 to 25 feet and gets excellent fall color. Others are ‘Robin Hill,’ which blooms with pale pink flowers, and ‘Princess Diana,’ which originated in Milwaukee, WI. ‘Princess Diana’ is the cultivar that I grew in Peoria.



Flowers of *Amelanchier x grandiflora* ‘Autumn Brilliance,’ a harbinger of spring.



Amelanchier x grandiflora ‘Princess Diana’ graces my former home in Peoria, IL

selections made for their outstanding fruit. It is a Great Plains native in the United States and Canada from Minnesota to the west coast. A note of trivia: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan has a baseball team called the Saskatoon Berries!

Amelanchier is an excellent small tree that will fit into any garden, large or small. Use it for accent or underneath larger trees. Though it can be pruned and trained as a single-stemmed tree, it works best multi-stemmed. Cedarburg, Wisconsin, where I reside, has successfully used the tree form in street tree plantings. However it is used, and whichever cultivar you choose, serviceberry is an outstanding plant that belongs in every hosta garden.



Amelanchier alnifolia 'Regent'



**Smooth bark of
Amelanchier x**



**Autumn foliage color of
Amelanchier laevis**



**Fruit of
Amelanchier x
grandiflora**

Additional articles on plants and gardening can be found on my blog: <https://TheCottageGardener53012.Wordpress.com>



Hostas Happenin's

Don Rawson, Grand Rapids, MI

Dr. Warren I. Pollock: His Lifelong Contributions to Hostadom

At the age of 95, Dr. Warren I. Pollock of Glen Mills, PA, is one of the most senior members of the American Hosta Society. Furthermore, Dr. Pollock is the eldest individual serving as an officer of the Society, holding the position of Nomenclature Co-chair. His many years of service and ceaseless dedication to the organization for the cause of hostadom are noteworthy in all respects.

Pollock joined the American Hosta Society in 1978 while residing in Wilmington, DE. Not long after, he became more actively involved by authoring two articles for the *AHS Bulletin* in 1981. (The *AHS Bulletin* predates the current society publication, *The Hosta Journal*.) The first article was about the leaf substance of hostas, with a focus on Hosta 'Sum and Substance'. The second article was on comparing yellow-leaved hostas with one another, and how sunlight affects the color (strong light vs. heavy shade). The following year, Pollock was listed as one of the "Exhibition Judges for Hosta Shows" in the 1982 *Bulletin*. The *Bulletin* editor, Russell O'Harra, included this note: "Special thanks to Warren Pollock and Peter Ruh for their help in making this issue so special. I am sure Warren spent as many hours as I did." Pollock's role in serving as chair of the AHS Nomenclature Committee began in 1983, a position he holds to this day.



Photographer unknown.

The caption for this photo from the 1983 *AHS Bulletin* read, "Diana Grenfell, BHHS Chairman, and BHHS Secretary Richard M. Kitchingman (left), with AHS Advisory Board member Warren Pollock at BHHS meeting at Mrs. Grenfell's home in Woking, Surrey, England, July 1982." Photo by Ali Pollock.

Warren's column titled "What's in a Hosta Name?" began with the 1984 *Bulletin*, and it was this year that Pollock was first listed as co-editor of the *Bulletin* along with Russell O'Harra. He was also co-chair of the Finance Committee, and in 1985, served as co-chair of the Awards and Honors Committee. The first edition of *The Hosta Journal* in Spring 1986 listed Warren I. Pollock as editor. Over the years, the Journal has been richly blessed with his oversight and many contributions to the publication.

For a remarkable total of 39 years, the "What's in a Hosta Name?" column remained an integral component of *The Hosta Journal*, with the final edition (Part LXXVII) appearing in the 2023, Vol. 24, No. 2 issue. In addition, Pollock authored the "Reflections" and "Potpourri" columns, both retired in 2021.

Early Life, Education and Family

Warren I. Pollock was born on May 31, 1930, in Rochester, NY. His father was an optician, working for the Shuron, an American optical manufacturer founded in 1865 and is now based in Greenville, South Carolina.

An only child, Warren went to Syracuse University in Syracuse, NY, obtaining a degree in chemistry. He subsequently acquired a doctorate in engineering from Carnegie Technological University, then known as the Carnegie Institute of Technology. He served as adjunct professor at the University of Pittsburgh.

Five sons know him as father — three from his first marriage and two stepsons from his second marriage. They are spread throughout the U.S., with a stepson Lance who lives and works in Mexico, tending yachts at Puerto Vallarta. Warren has no daughters.

Career

At the age of 25, Warren Pollock was hired by DuPont in Wilmington, DE. Working as a manager of a group of material engineers at the DuPont Experimental Station, located on the banks of Brandywine Creek, his specialty was titanium dioxide and metal corrosion. Titanium dioxide (TiO₂) is a chemical compound known for its bright white, opaque pigment. It was a huge product for DuPont, being the world's foremost supplier for several decades due to their superior—and patented—production process. The compound is used in paints, cosmetics, plastics, and paper to make things whiter. It has various applications due to its UV-resistant and reflective properties.



Photo: Hagley Museum and Library

The DuPont Building between 1930 and 1950. DuPont de Nemours, Inc., commonly shortened to DuPont, is a multinational chemical company formed in 1802 by French-American chemist and industrialist Éleuthère Irénée du Pont de Nemours. Today, DuPont is a global leader in technology-based materials, ranging from water purification, printing, and packaging to automotive, healthcare, and aerospace solutions.



E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company corporate photo

Aerial photo of the Dupont Experimental Station in the summer of 1997. Brandywine Creek is in the immediate foreground and right. The DuPont Experimental Station was founded as an effort to move the DuPont Company from gunpowder and explosives into chemistry. The site overlooks the original powder mills upon which the company was founded. The station serves as the primary research and development facility for DuPont.

While working at DuPont, Pollock along with other engineers founded the Materials Technology Institute of the Chemical Process Industries in 1977, now known as the Materials Technology Institute. The purpose was to provide like-minded chemical processing industry engineers with crucial research and resources as well as collaborative opportunities. These founding engineers realized that if they pooled their collective resources and brainpower, they could significantly increase their abilities to leverage funding for research. Founders Bob Puyear and Bert Krisher of Monsanto, Paul Dillon and George Elder of Union Carbide, and Warren Pollock of DuPont shared the vision of a collaborative network of industry experts and major companies working to solve major chemical processing issues. The Institute and its member companies around the world continue to provide global leadership in materials technology research and solutions.

Pollock's Adventure with Hostas

While living and working in Wilmington, DE, the Pollock family needed a larger home, so Warren hired an architect to design it. Once the home was built, it became obvious that the backyard included a lot of trees and many sun-loving plants would not be well-suited for the landscape. This led to some research on his part, in which he discovered that hostas grew well in a shaded environment. A trip to a local nursery solved the problem and Warren soon acquired the hosta bug.



Photo by Hans Hansen. Used by permission.

When asked about what his favorite hosta is, Warren replied, "Well, my favorite new hosta is 'Emperor's New Clothes' because it is so unusual."

During this time, Warren was contacted by Alex J. Summers. Alex was the founder and first president of the American Hosta Society along with Eunice V. Fisher of Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Alex originally lived in Long Island, New York, but later moved to a farm in Bridgeville, DE where property was more affordable and taxes were lower. At this point, Alex learned of Warren Pollock who lived not too far away and contacted him about growing hostas on the farm. A friendship was born and together, the two men founded the Delaware Valley Hosta Society. Warren served as the society's first president. Despite his age, Pollock is still a member of his local hosta society.

Growing and Overwintering Hostas in Containers

With this title, Warren Pollock authored an article for Fall 1994 issue of *The Hosta Journal*. As perhaps the most memorable essay of all those penned by Warren, the composition extended over six *Journals* in total, with the last part in the Spring 1998 issue.

The article in its entirety can be accessed on the Hosta Library at <https://www.hostalibrary.org/articles/Pots.htm>. The preface to the article, by Bill Meyer, says, "Nothing defined their Wilmington, Delaware garden more than the fantastic collection of hostas in pots found mostly on their driveway. Warren's past mastery of the art of growing hostas in pots is unequalled today, and this article reveals many of the secrets of his success."

**"Growing and Overwintering Hostas in Containers,"
a six-part series by Warren I. Pollock in *The Hosta Journal*.**

Part I – *THJ* Fall 1994, Vol. 25, No.2, p. 80

Part II – *THJ* Spring 1995, Vol. 26, No.1, p. 69

Part III – *THJ* Fall 1995, Vol. 26, No.2, p. 88

Part IV – *THJ* Spring 1996, Vol. 27, No.1, p. 77

Part V – *THJ* Fall 1995, Vol. 27, No.2, p. 89

Part VI – *THJ* Spring 1998, Vol. 29, No.1, p. 29

Not all the hostas grown by Warren and Ali were in containers, but many were. For example, a total of 187 were overwintered in pots during the 1997-1998 season. The final statement in this six-part series says, "The bottom line: if you will put up with all the tender loving care requirements, both in summer and winter, growing hostas in containers has many rewards," (*THJ*, 1998, Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 35).



Photo by Tom Micheletti. Used by permission.

The Pollock garden had an expansive bouquet of container-grown hostas on the patio with a variety of sizes, shapes, and colors. Warren wrote, “In 1992, Ali, my wife, and I had one hundred sixty-seven hostas growing luxuriantly in containers in our garden, and we moved all of them to a protected location in late fall...As it turns out, we do have more hostas in the ground than in containers, but not many more.”

Awards by The American Hosta Society

In 1985, Warren Pollock was granted the Alex J. Summers Distinguished Merit Award by the American Hosta Society. This award is the highest award offered by the Society. It is awarded to a member in recognition of having given outstanding service to the American Hosta Society, the development of the genus *Hosta*, or both. Warren Pollock was the third individual whom was granted this prestigious award. Alex Summers was the first granted the award in 1982, and Peter Ruh was second in 1984.

The *Hosta Journal*, Spring 1986, page 12, summarizes the contributions made by Pollock with this statement: “The 1985 recipient is Warren I. Pollock, an Advisory Board member of The American Hosta Society since 1982. He is cited for his editorship of the AHS *BULLETIN* and chairmanship of the AHS Nomenclature Committee.” The Distinguished Merit Hosta selected by Warren for this award was *Hosta montana* ‘Aureomarginata’.

As a side note, the Spring 1986 issue (of which Pollock was editor) was the first printing of the premiere periodical of The American Hosta Society, *The Hosta Journal*. On the editor’s page, Pollock wrote, “All the features of the previous publications will be found in

The Hosta Journal which will be issued twice a year, in the spring and fall. *The Hosta Journal* will contain practical information; stories about hostas, gardens, and gardeners; topical reports; and technical and scientific articles.” Forty years later, the bi-annual publication remains true to its mission, as set forth by Pollock in 1986. Today, with the addition of more color photographs, higher quality paper, modern formatting and so on, *The Hosta Journal* has seen improvements over the past four decades, but its purpose remains unaltered.

Years later, at the 2018 national convention in Philadelphia, Dr. Pollock was honored with the American Hosta Society Lifetime Achievement Award. Recipients of this award are selected by the President to reward outstanding, long-time service to the AHS on the national level. The award is granted to one individual each year. Warren Pollock is very deserving of both awards!



Photo from the 2018 AHS National Convention. Photographer unknown.

Left to right: Gregg Peterson, Dr. Warren Pollock, and Ali Pollock, as Warren receives the Lifetime Achievement Award from The American Hosta Society.

Scientific Contributions and Publications

Along with B. J. M. Zonneveld, Dr. Pollock co-authored *Sporting in Hostas: A Primer* in 2018. Pollock partially funded the printing cost for the publication. When copies of the first printing were exhausted, Warren Pollock covered the entire expense for a second printing.

The purpose of this printed resource is to explain 11 sporting rules in hostas, with examples for each rule. Using high quality paper, the booklet includes 39 color photos to illustrate these rules. The publication can be ordered (\$15 ppd) by writing to Barry Ankney, Publications Sales, PO Box 7407, Villa Park, IL60181-7407, or by sending an email to ahs.publications.sales@gmail.com. (Editor's Note: limited quantity are available)

Furthermore, Dr. Warren I. Pollock has co-authored several publications, including the following:

"H. 'Stitch in Time': A Multiple Mystery." B.J.M. Zonneveld, Warren I. Pollock, Robert A. Mortko, and Steven C. Chamberlain. *The Hosta Journal*, Spring 2009.

"Flow cytometric analysis of somaclonal variation in lineages of Hosta sports detects polyploidy and aneuploidy chimeras." B.J.M. Zonneveld and Warren I. Pollock, *Plant Biology*, June 2012.

"Sports and hybrids of triploid Hosta 'Sum and Substance' reveal chromosome losses and gains in all three apical layers." B.J.M. Zonneveld and Warren I. Pollock, *Plant Systematics and Evolution*, June 2012.

"Sports and hybrids of triploid Hosta 'Sum and Substance' reveal chromosome losses and gains in all three apical layers." B.J.M. Zonneveld and Warren I. Pollock, *Plant Systematics and Evolution*, June 2012.

"Seasonal Color Changes in Hosta Leaves." B. J. M. Zonneveld, D. A. Rawson and W. I. Pollock, *The Hosta Journal*, Spring 2024.



Photo by Janet Mills. Used by permission

**Dr. Warren Pollock
giving an
educational
presentation at the
2018 National
Convention of The
American Hosta
Society in
Philadelphia.**

Current Life

Dr. Warren Pollock currently resides at Maris Grove Senior Living Community in Glen Mills, PA. This unincorporated community is located approximately 27 miles west of Philadelphia. The name “Glen Mills” is taken from two paper mills built by the Willcox family, one in 1835 and the second in 1846. From 1864 to 1878, these mills supplied the United States government with a special, patented paper for the printing of government bonds and notes.

The retirement complex of Maris Grove includes a total of about 2,000 units, with four restaurants. The various buildings are inter-connected, allowing seniors to walk from one to another through heated corridors. It is here that Warren has dwelt for the past 15 years.

During his elderly years, Warren has continued to hosta garden. Even for most of the 15 years at Maris Grove, he continued to grow hostas, most of which were in containers placed on the balcony where he could see and tend them. More recently, he has passed his beloved plants on to another good friend at the complex, Gordon Schloagman. During the summer season, both men can step outdoors daily to see such beauties as ‘Blue Angel’, ‘Coast to Coast’, ‘June’, ‘Liberty’, and ‘Gunther’s Prize’, among others, not to mention all the colorful caladiums that Gordon plants each spring. I think it just indicates that Warren still has the hosta bug after all these years!



Photo by Gordon Schloagman. Used by permission.

When he was no longer able to care for the hostas on his balcony, Warren gifted them to his friend and fellow resident, Gordon Schloagman, who has a unit on the ground floor. Warren and Gordon both continue to enjoy them. Hostas truly are the friendship plant.”

Final Comments

For the past two decades or more in which I have known Warren Pollock, he has been a kind and caring friend as well as a wonderful mentor. I have enjoyed and benefited from working with him on the AHS Nomenclature Committee, and have learned much from the innumerable emails and conversations we have had over the years about every facet relating to hostas. I greatly respect this man who has given so much to The American Hosta Society, to me, and to hosta gardeners in general. God bless you, my friend.



Warren Pollock with Donald Rawson, at a meeting of the Delaware Valley Hosta Society, April 2023. At the age of 95, Warren remains a member of his local hosta society, and is particularly helpful during the society's plant auctions. His knowledge of hostas is firmly rooted in his knowledge of the hosta people with whom he has been acquainted over the years. Transferring that knowledge has been a key component of their hosta auctions: every hosta has a story of the person who created or discovered it.



Hybridizer Corner . . .

Don Rawson, Grand Rapids, MI

The Hybridizer's Corner is for anyone who is interested in hosta breeding and growing seedlings — for both the beginner as well as the experienced hybridizer. Jump right in and join us on this exciting adventure!

Review

Collecting hosta seed in the fall is always exciting in anticipation of what will be produced once the seed is sown and tiny, new seedlings begin to appear. This is true for open pollinated seed, but even more so for seed that is the result of an intentional cross. If you have established some goals in your hybridizing program, you will likely be one step closer in achieving them.

It is essential to give the seed time to mature before harvesting it, but equally important to collect the seed before the pods split open. The point is that you should not neglect to harvest the seed in a timely manner. Once the seedpods are picked, they can be placed in paper envelopes or lunch bags. Mark the cross on the outside and store the seed in a cool, dry place. The pods will eventually turn brown and many will split open on their own to release the seed inside.



Photo by Patrick Looney. Used by permission.

Hosta seed, ready for cleaning. Many of the seedpods have already split open. Those that have not will need to be pried open. Rolling the pods between your fingers or against the table may make them open a bit easier.

In the last issue, we also discussed the procedure for cleaning the seed. Once the pods split open, they can be emptied into a box or covered bowl and shaken vigorously to knock loose those that are still lodged inside the pod. Then it's just a matter of picking out the last few seeds.

Separating Good Seed from the Poor Seed

Mature, potentially viable seeds are dark brown or black. At one end of the papery wing is a small, swollen embryo (kernel). The wing is just there to help the wind disperse the seed. With hostas, any white seeds failed to mature for whatever reason and should be discarded.



Photo by Randy Triplett. Used by permission.

Mature, potentially viable seeds are dark brown or black. At one end of the papery wing is a small, swollen embryo (kernel). The wing is just there to help the wind disperse the seed. With hostas, any white seeds failed to mature for whatever reason and should be discarded.

If hosta seed is to be sold, then it should be de-winged or closely inspected to ensure it has a defined bulge from the kernel inside. While a de-winged seed or defined bump does not guarantee its viability, it is the least a seller should do.

Separating the good seed from the poor seed and chaff can be quite time-consuming, particularly when dealing with a large amount of seed. There are a few tricks that are helpful with this task. One method is to gently blow on the seed to remove the chaff. Another method is to carefully toss the seed and chaff across the table. The chaff and poor seed will not travel as far as the heavier, plump seed.

One innovative method, proposed by Doug Ruff of Buffalo, MN, involves the use of the BugBuster BB100 insect vacuum. Manufactured by SonicTechnology, the BugBuster is portable, battery-powered, low-velocity vacuum designed to catch bugs without harming them. While it is a device moms will appreciate having around when a spider or bee is found in the house, it is also a toy that your kids will enjoy. The BugBuster operates on one 9V battery (not included) and is available on Amazon for \$19.95.



For our purpose, the BugBuster is used to vacuum up hosta seed, not insects. Once it is ordered and arrives, install the clear plastic extension tube and the tapered head, as well as the battery. Then, just turn it on and vacuum up the seed. Much of the chaff and seed will stick to the inside of the tube, especially those capsules that are lighter with no plump kernel inside. Next, slowly lower the tube downward until the plump seed falls out into a bowl or tray. The poor seed and chaff will remain inside the tube.

If no seed falls out of the tube when pointed downward, it is an indication that the battery is still too strong. Give the device to your children for 20 minutes and then it should be just right. When you need it back, remind them that the BugBuster is a precision-honed tool engineered for pest removal and not just a toy!



Photo by Don Rawson.

The BugBuster BB100 by SonicTechnology is a clever device for separating chaff and poor seed from good seed. Hosta seed is first vacuumed up, and then the nozzle is lowered to empty out the heavier, plump seed. The lighter, poor seed remains inside the tube and is discarded.



Photo by Don Rawson

Here, the heavier seed that dropped out onto the tray is checked to ensure there is a plump kernel inside.



Photo by Don Rawson.

Once the good seed is dropped onto the tray, the extension tube can be cleaned out with a bottle brush, or by pushing a piece of polyester fiber stuffing through it.

Using a Sieve to De-wing Hosta Seed

In the last issue, the pros and cons to removing the wings on hosta seeds were discussed. It is a task that requires time and it is not required for the seed to germinate. Furthermore, a few seeds could potentially be damaged in the process. Many hybridizers just go ahead and plant them, wings and all, and have good success.

On the other hand, some indicate they have less issue with fungus when the wings are removed and faster germination compared to seeds that are not de-winged. A few may claim to have higher germination rates with de-winged seeds. While a de-winged seed does not guarantee its viability, it is often favored over seed capsules that have not been de-winged.

An appropriately sized sieve can make quick work of removing the wings on hosta seed. A sieve is a utensil consisting of wire or plastic mesh held in a frame, used for straining solids from liquids, or for separating coarser particles from finer particles. The most common international standard specifies aperture sizes in millimeters or micrometers. For example, a sieve may have a mesh opening of 1 mm or 2.5 mm. An older system, still sometimes used, designates a sieve's mesh size by the number of openings per linear inch, with a "4-mesh" sieve having four openings per inch.

Not all hosta seed is the same size, but a coarse wire mesh sieve will be suitable most of the time. The process involves gently rubbing the seed in a circular motion against the side of the sieve until the wings come off. The wings, once pulverized, fall through the sieve

while the perfectly cleaned kernels remain. The de-winged seed is then transferred into a storage container and placed into the refrigerator or freezer.



Photos by Don Rawson.

(1) Placing the seed into the sieve. (2) Rubbing the seed against the wall of the sieve in a circular motion. (3) Transferring the seed to a storage capsule. (4) Placing the capsule into an air-tight container.

Summary

An insect vacuum and wire mesh sieve are perfect companions. They complement each other. When equipped with both tools, the hybridizer can efficiently process large amounts of hosta seed in short order. First, the vacuum removes all the chaff and poor seed. At this point, all that remains is plump, good seed. Then, with a sieve, the good seed can be de-winged in a minute or two and is ready for storage. Investing in these two simple but essential tools is money well spent. They will save the hybridizer much time and work so that other things can be focused upon.

As a side note, make sure the capsules used for storing the seed are well labeled. Stickers sometimes fall off. The ink from Sharpies often smudges or fades away. Capsules should be labeled top and bottom so that when the lid is removed, the identification of the seed is still known.

In the next issue, we will cover the procedure for long-term storage, should you choose to plant the seeds months or even years later. Should hosta seed be placed in the refrigerator or freezer — or neither.

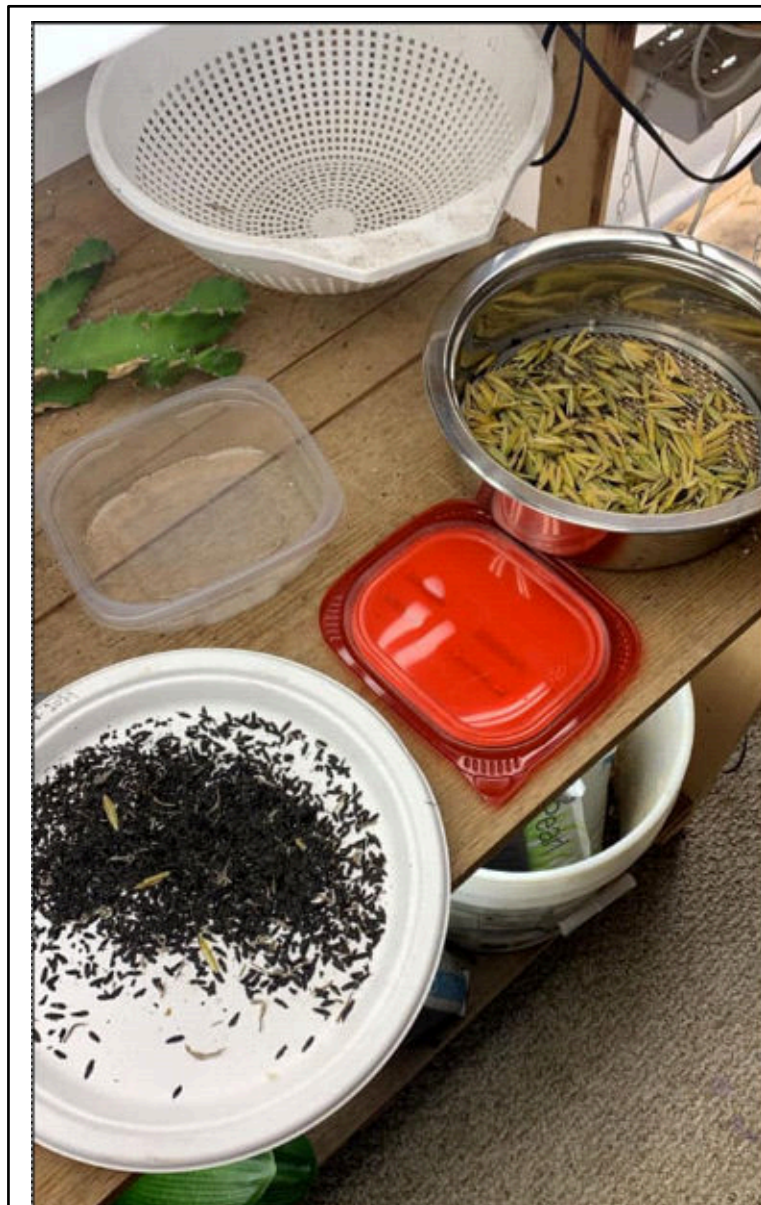


Photo by Patrick Looney. Used by permission.

A plateful of hosta seeds. Some hybridizers de-wing the seeds, while others do not. There are pros and cons to each.



Welcome to My Garden

Gail Russo, Cedarville, New Jersey



Gail Russo

Please meet

Roberta and Dave Chopko
from Boonton, NJ



You're driving down the road one day in New Jersey and you see a vanity license plate on the vehicle in front of you boldly displaying "HOSTA."

There's no doubt about who this could possibly be- it's the Chopkos! Ocean Isle- Jersey style.

The man, the myth, the legend? You decide!



Young David Chopko had little interest in gardening; his childhood home in a small town near Scranton, Pennsylvania in the 1950's had a tree in the front yard, a shrub or two by the house, and some annuals and a vegetable garden in the rear, with nothing spectacular to draw interest. After graduating from high school in 1968, Dave enlisted in the Army as an SP5 in aviation, working in helicopter maintenance and completing two tours in Vietnam. This time in the service set the foundation for his life and created unimaginable ties to his future.

Dave met Roberta, the girl from Brooklyn, NY, on a barstool in Pennsylvania, after an unexpected introduction by a mutual friend. He was 23 and she was 22, and three and a half years later, they were married. Defying the odds, coming from entirely different educational backgrounds and different religions, 53 years have passed, and they have remained together, creating an amazing home and history.

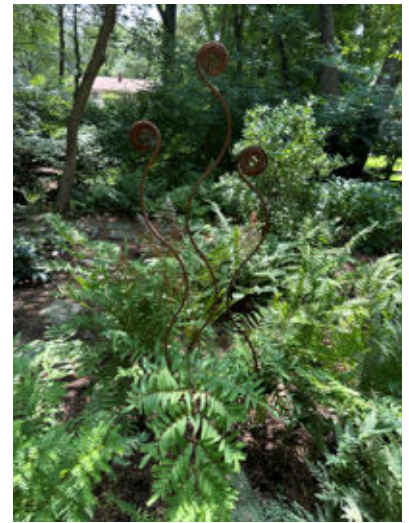
After he left the Army, Dave worked for Pratt & Whitney in Connecticut, manufacturing jet plane engines. Roberta worked for FIND/SVP as a research librarian. They married in 1972 and moved into an apartment in Riverdale, NY (the Bronx), with Dave employed as a manager in an auto body shop named Fort Washington Auto Body, in which he soon became the sole owner. After five years of apartment living and surviving a burglary, they decided it was time to move out of New York. They bought a house and settled in Boonton, NJ, in 1977 because it was midway between both parents and an easy commute to their workplaces in New York.

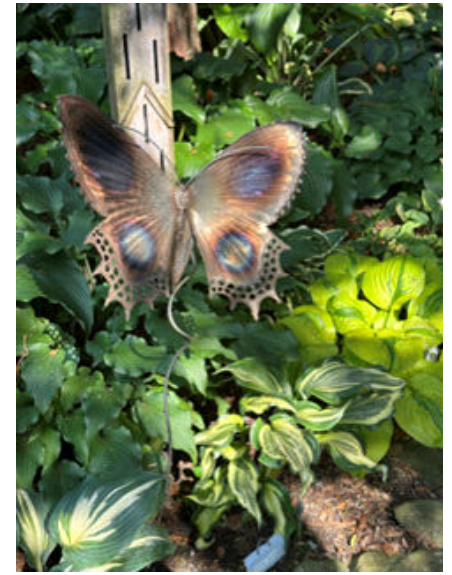
The property they purchased was marketed as a “mini farm” on just about an acre lot, including a creek that is a tributary from the Rockaway River. The soil is primarily rocky, but since the previous owners were heavily into vegetable farming, it had already been amended and conditioned. There were some plantings around the house and along the perimeter of the property, but they were not notably decorative. Dave recalls that he saw some hostas planted but not knowing what they were, he was intrigued to find out. He learned that the large blue-grey plants were *Hosta sieboldiana* ‘Elegans’, and he liked them so much that he soon became interested in gardening with more hosta varieties.

Dave and Roberta vacationed with family in Ocean Isle, NC, for many years and in 1996 they bought a house at the beach, 800 feet from the Atlantic Ocean. This fact, and having a very close friend living in North Carolina, brought the Chopkos to North Carolina frequently over the 80s and 90s. The friend was heavily into hosta gardening, and he introduced them to Tony Avent, owner of Plant Delights Nursery and Juniper Level Botanical Garden, Bob Solberg, owner of Green Hill Farm, Betty Jernigan, Loleta Powell, Ursula Herz, and other notable hosta growers in the state. Hostas were just gaining popularity during this time, and these growers were instrumental in creating new varieties to offer to gardeners.

In 1993, Tony introduced Dave to Walter Cullerton, founder of the Tri-State Hosta Society, which Dave and Roberta promptly joined. A few years later, Dave was elected as president of the Tri-State Hosta Society and both he and Roberta have alternated being president for most of the past 25 years. They are also members of The American Hosta Society and the Delaware Valley Hosta Society.

Over the past 40 years, they have amassed a collection of nearly 3,000 hosta varieties. They have planted their property with trees, shrubbery and rare perennials amidst the hostas, to accumulate one of the largest collections of rare hostas in the United States. Though Roberta loves hostas too, she favors ferns and has a large collection of hardy ferns planted in the shadiest part of the yard. They have decorated their garden with unique garden art, metal sculptures, birdbaths and cat sculptures, in memory of the seven cats they owned over the years. Roberta also loves creating hypertufa planters and trough gardens, placing many of them throughout the garden and on the patio.





Located in the northern part of NJ, planting hardiness zone 6b, the Chopkos (now fully retired) enjoy the seasonal garden weather until December, when they travel to Ocean Isle, NC, to spend Christmas in a warmer climate while the hostas are dormant. Dave spends this time updating his spreadsheets and hosta records with relevant changes that occurred throughout the year. All the hostas planted in their garden are labeled with the name in black lettering on white tape (Brother P-Touch) on a metal plant marker. They keep a hosta spreadsheet recording the name, date purchased, source, cost and location in the garden. Dave has the property separated into eighteen sections on a map. They return home to New Jersey when the weather is warming, and they look forward to seeing the hosta pips emerging.

Throughout their years in the AHS, the Chopkos have attended most of the annual conventions, First Look, and local society conferences across the country. When they joined the AHS, hosta hybridizing was just kicking into gear and is when “the classics” were created by the early hosta pioneers. They met many of them and Dave fondly recalls meeting Van Wade, whom he calls “his idol.” They would sit and talk during gatherings and Dave said this is where he learned about generosity. He said, “I learned to share. Hostas bring people together. Conventions aren’t about hostas; they’re about the people. When you share your hostas with other people, they share their hostas with you. I vowed right then to NEVER sell a hosta.”

Dave recalls meeting and befriending hosta legends such as Peter Ruh, Alex Summers, Bruce Banyai, Mildred and Charlie Seaver, Herb Benedict, Bob Kuk, Jack Barta, Bob Olson, Jim Wilkins, Doug Beilstein and Chick Wasitis, to name just a few. He became fast friends with many of them, creating relationships that last to this day. Dave said, “Herb Benedict never sold a plant. I thought that was really cool and wanted to do it too. You visit a friend and bring a hosta gift, and they send you home with a hosta gift from them. This generation doesn’t do this and it’s sad.”

To prove his vow, Dave noted that he recorded 127 new hosta varieties in his spreadsheet this year and that he donated and/or gifted 216 hostas over the past year. Dave keeps a record of which hostas he donates and, if gifts, who he gave them to. He

figures if he ever loses a variety that he has gifted, he knows where he can get a replacement from.

During the annual AHS convention, various awards are distributed to members. One of them is the Shirley and Van Wade AHS Convention Auction Contributor Award, which is presented to the person with the highest total earnings from a single donor's auction contributions. Following in Van Wade's footsteps, Dave Chopko has donated plants to this annual auction since 2012 and won this award several times since that year, probably generating in excess of \$35,000 to the AHS from plants he donated.



The Shirley & Van Wade Award is presented to the person with the highest total dollar earnings from a single person's donations to the AHS auction. Roberta and Dave have won the Shirley & Van Wade award for the past eight consecutive years.

Planting nearly 3,000 (plus or minus) hostas on less than an acre of land is a pretty impressive feat, and Dave admits that he is running short on space. This prompted him to begin planting his hostas in pots.

Dave's best advice to hosta gardeners is, "When you run out of room, go to pots! Hostas, especially the big ones, grow just as nicely in pots as they do in the ground, without the hassle of root competition!"

Dave and Roberta tend their gardens themselves.

The property uses city water, and they do not have an automatic sprinkler system. When rain is insufficient, they have to water by hand with a hose or tripod sprinkler. This is especially true of the potted hostas, which require more water since they are confined to a container. These must be watered daily, if necessary. They do not fertilize their garden, but they must fertilize the potted hostas annually with Osmocote. In addition, due to the climate in New Jersey, all the potted hostas must be moved into an unheated, covered shelter for the winter to prevent damage, which is a large late autumn task. Dave estimates that he stored 652 potted hostas in his custom designed building last winter. Winters in zone 6b consist of periods of rain followed by freezing, then thawing and freezing again. The soil at the bottom of a pot does not thaw fully, trapping the melted ice water until it freezes again. This damages the cells of the crown, leading to what many gardeners refer to as crown rot. Placing potted hostas in a shelter protects them from this damage.



At the 2024 AHS Convention held in Massachusetts, Dave won the Meyer Award for the best hosta sport or seedling entered into the competition.



A creek from the Rockaway River runs across the back end of their property and creates a soothing shady area to visit. Roberta likes this area for planting her ferns and other shade perennials because it is shady and the deer don't bother the ferns.

Because the back end of their property is a running creek, enclosing the property in fencing is not possible, so they constantly battle a growing deer population. Their deterrent methods include the use of motion-activated "Scarecrow" sprinklers, and rotating the application of Liquid Fence, Milorganite and Ocean Gro (a New Jersey product equivalent to Milorganite) every three weeks - methods that they find reasonably effective.

The warmer, wetter summers recently have resulted in Southern Blight, which requires very specific treatment with a fungicide to prevent spread. As trees and other plantings grow larger, so do their root systems, which necessitates the relocation of hostas to ensure they survive. Hostas often require this kind of maintenance, and as gardeners age, this proves more difficult every year, as the Chopkos are discovering.



It is natural that deer follow water sources and that brings them right into the back end of the property, where it is not possible to fully fence it. Any hostas that are planted in this area are the first to be eaten which becomes the prompt to put down more deterrent and set up the scarecrows. Dave does not keep his most prized hostas in this area of the yard!

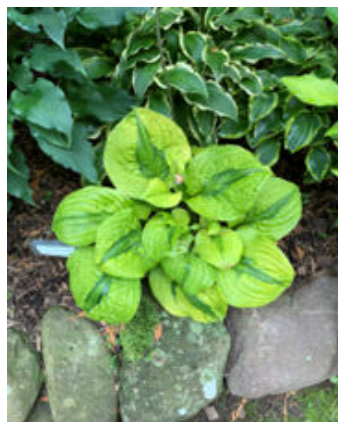
Dave does not grow hostas from seed. However, he manages to identify many hosta sports throughout their collection. Those require their own identification once separated from the mother clump. They have chosen to use the moniker “Ocean Isle” when naming their hosta sports, which have grown to approximately 30 originations, with the first one being simply *H.* ‘Ocean Isle’. Their list of originations includes *H.* ‘Ocean Isle Twist’, ‘Ocean Isle Tornado’, ‘Ocean Isle Tide Line’, ‘Ocean Isle Gold Dust’, ‘Sourpuss’, ‘Picklepuss’, ‘Dave’, and ‘Roberta’. Of their own originations, Dave’s favorite is *H.* ‘Sourpuss’ because it is a fabulous large grower. Roberta’s favorite is *H.* ‘Ocean Isle Tornado’.



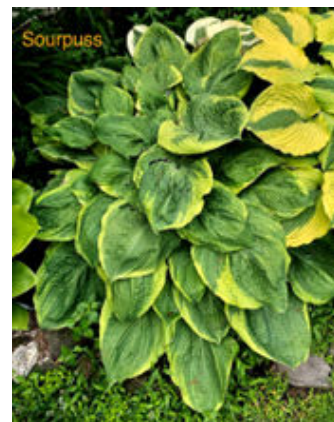
H. ‘Ocean Isle Gold Dust’



H. ‘Ocean Isle Tornado’



H. ‘Ocean Isle Abracadabra’



H. ‘Sourpuss’



H. ‘Ocean Isle Twist’



H. ‘Ocean Isle’



Left, *H.* ‘Roberta’ is planted right next to *H.* ‘Dave’, which was named for him by his good friend Bob Kuk.



Roberta poses with the hosta Dave named for her, *H.* ‘Roberta’.

Dave's favorite hosta, that he has not originated, is *H.* 'Simply Irresistible', a Chick Wasitis plant that is not yet on the market, and Roberta's is *H.* 'Midnight Oil', because it a distinctive dark green, easily spotted in the garden.



H. 'Midnight Oil' is unmistakable in the garden and is Roberta's favorite.

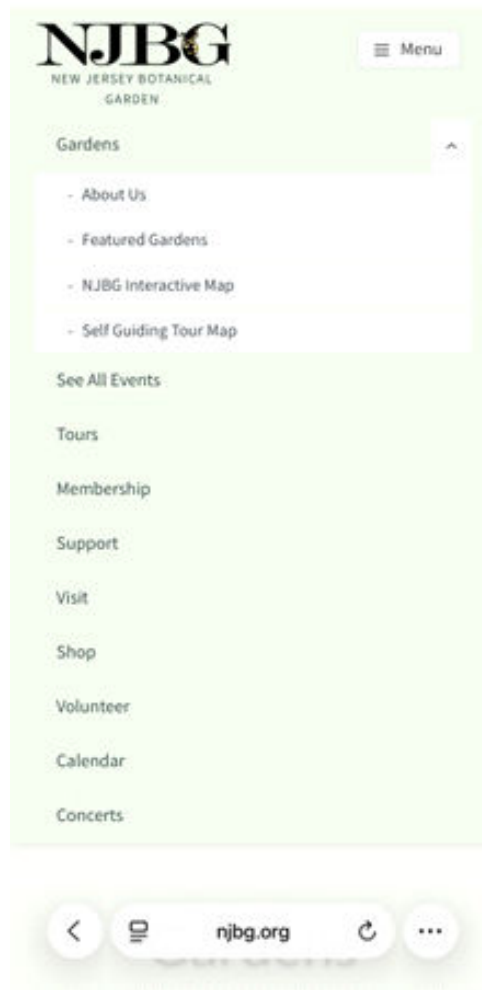
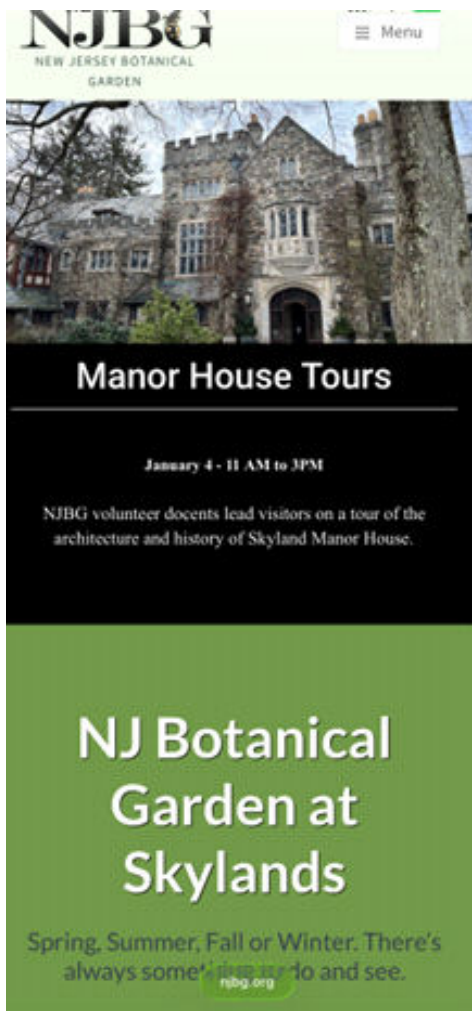


H. 'Simply Irresistible' is Dave's favorite.

Their favorite public garden is [Juniper Level Botanic Garden](#) in Raleigh, NC, owned by their friend Tony Avent. In addition to their donation to the Foundation established at NC State to ensure the future of this garden, they are annual members of the garden which grants them access to rare and undistributed plant varieties and annual plant gifts. They recommend that every gardener should try to visit this fabulous garden.

A little closer to their New Jersey home is Skylands, at the New Jersey Botanical Garden. Skylands is a 1,119-acre estate property located in Ringwood State Park in Ringwood, NJ, which includes the New Jersey Botanical Garden on 96 of those acres and is open to the public year-round. One of the sections of the garden is a fenced-in area dedicated to hostas and rhododendrons. When The Tri-State Hosta Society visited the garden as a club activity years ago, they were disappointed when they found very few hosta varieties there, especially no newer cultivars. When he retired, Dave decided to volunteer at Skylands, specifically tending the hosta garden. In true Dave fashion, he shared his hosta collection with the public by donating over 500 hosta varieties to this garden. He has designed their garden beds, planted the donated hostas, and labeled them all in the same fashion as his own garden. Further, the garden is inventoried on a spreadsheet and is mapped on an interactive map on the internet, utilizing satellite location, available to the public whether they are standing in the garden or in Iceland. Dave has spent hours in this garden, sharing not just his plants, but his time and expertise as well.

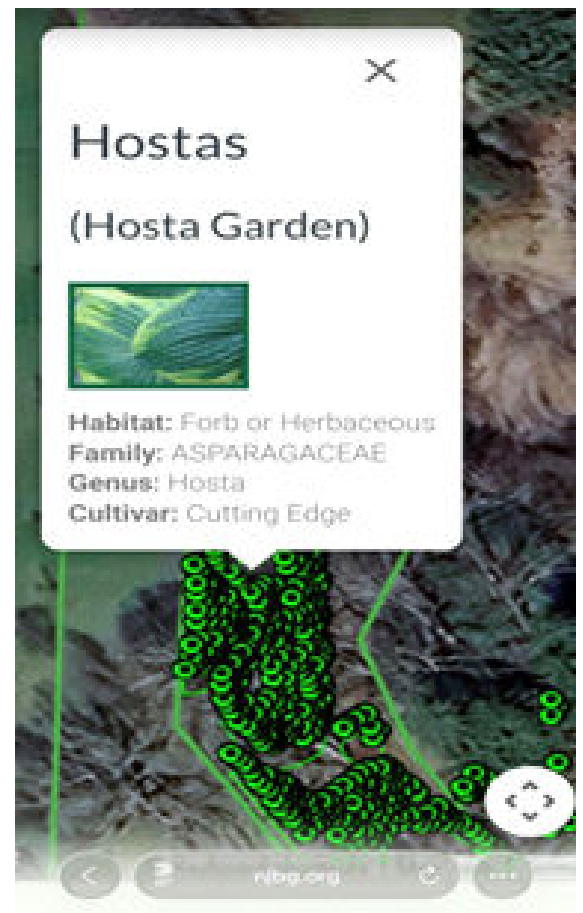
Here is the link to the site: <https://njbg.org/>



If you visit the website link on the previous page, you can click on the interactive satellite map and learn which hostas Dave has donated and how he has arranged them while planting and maintaining this garden.

Each green dot on the map on the far right represents a hosta planted in the garden.

If you visit the garden in person, the map will identify the hosta you are looking at!



When asked if they have any plans for future expansion, Dave laughed because they are completely out of space, which is also his biggest regret. They had the opportunity to purchase the property next door to theirs and did not. He now wishes they had. They also regret that they “allowed” the neighbor to plant marsh marigolds on their side of the creek because they have migrated to his side of the creek, thrived and become invasive.

Dave believes that every large garden should have at least a small tractor because gardening tasks don’t get easier as you get older. Everyone needs all the help they can get, and that’s why Roberta believes everyone should just have a garden elf if you can find one! I know I’d like to have one of those myself!

Hostas have been coined “the friendship plant” and Dave believes that wholeheartedly. Many of the friends he counts closest in his life were encountered through hostas. Go to the conventions whenever you’re able to! You might be surprised to learn that there are people there with whom you have more things in common than just a love of hostas. They attended the convention this year in East Peoria, Illinois and learned that Dave and Barry Ankney, the AHS Membership Chair, both served in Vietnam at the same place and same time and never knew each other, but now they do. They might never have met anywhere else.

So, if you ever see that vehicle from New Jersey with the plates proudly proclaiming HOSTA, take a moment to find them and strike up a conversation. If you share their love of hostas, arrange to visit their garden. Since that’s not often possible, we are going to share a walk through their garden in photos. Enjoy the scroll!



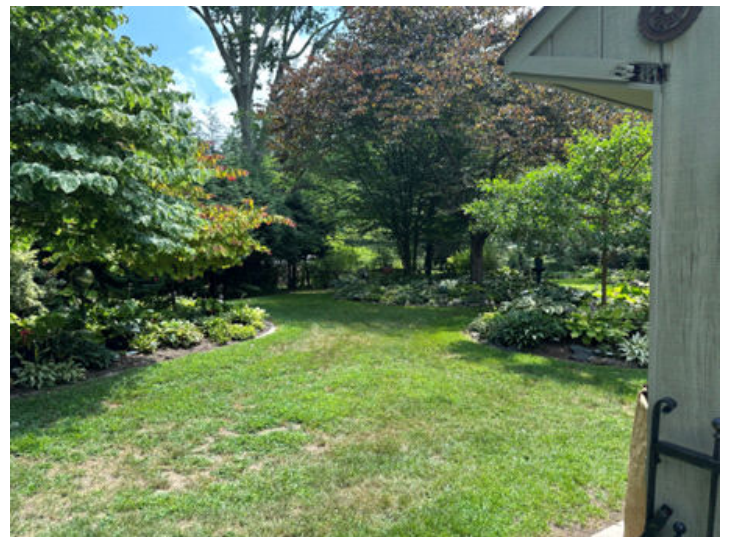
Left, the custom-built potting shed where all the magic happens. This is where Dave “works” when dividing, maintaining and sharing hostas.

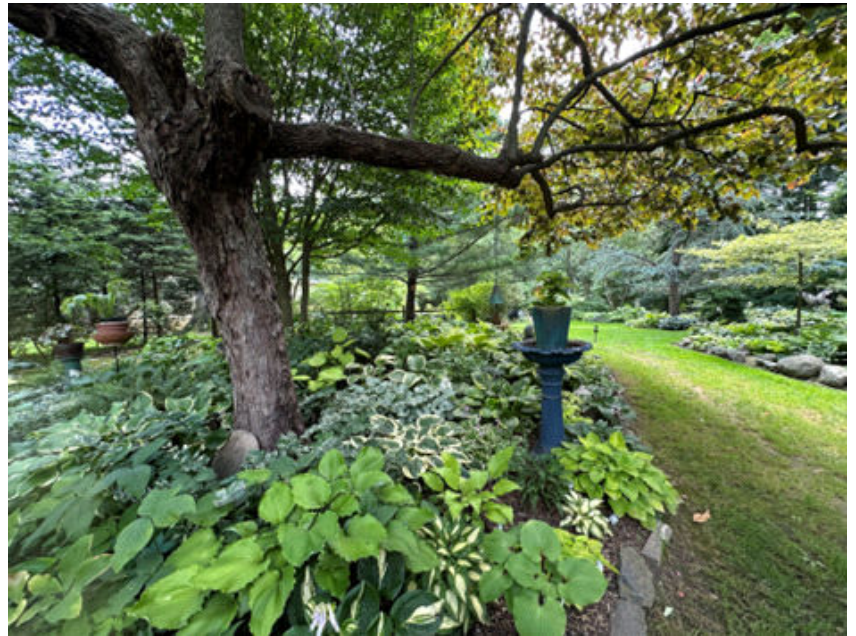
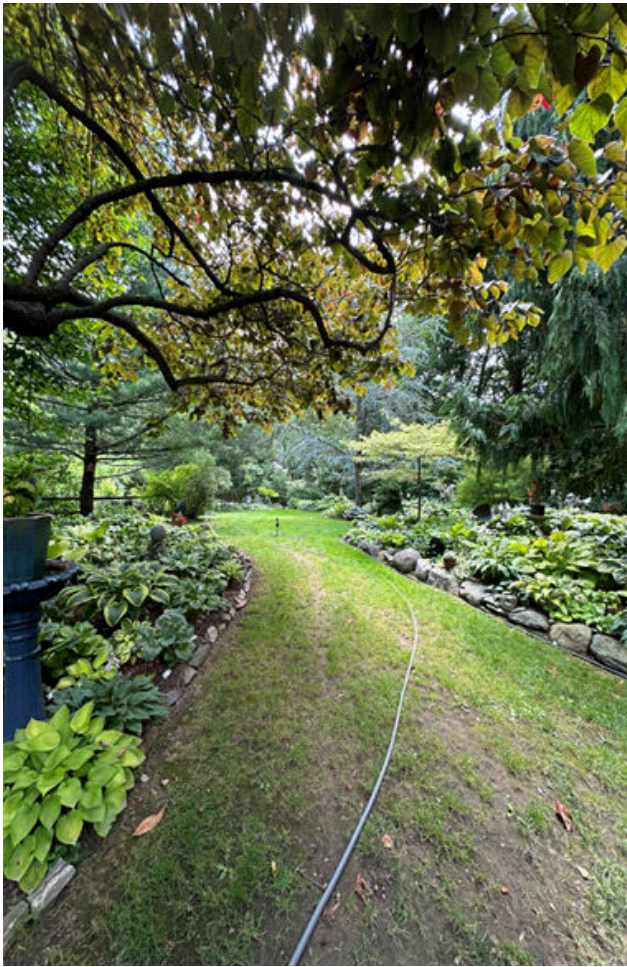


Above, handcrafted and gifted by a very good hosta friend, the stained-glass art that hangs right over the potted collection of hostas proudly proclaims the owners of this fabulous garden.

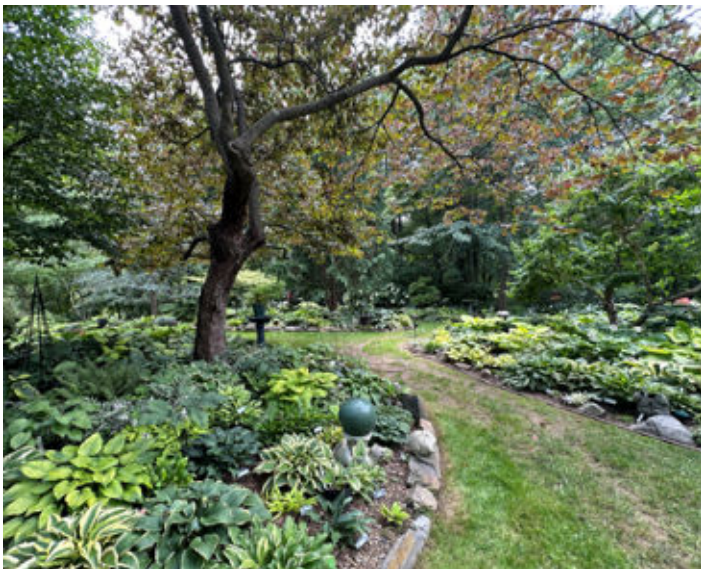


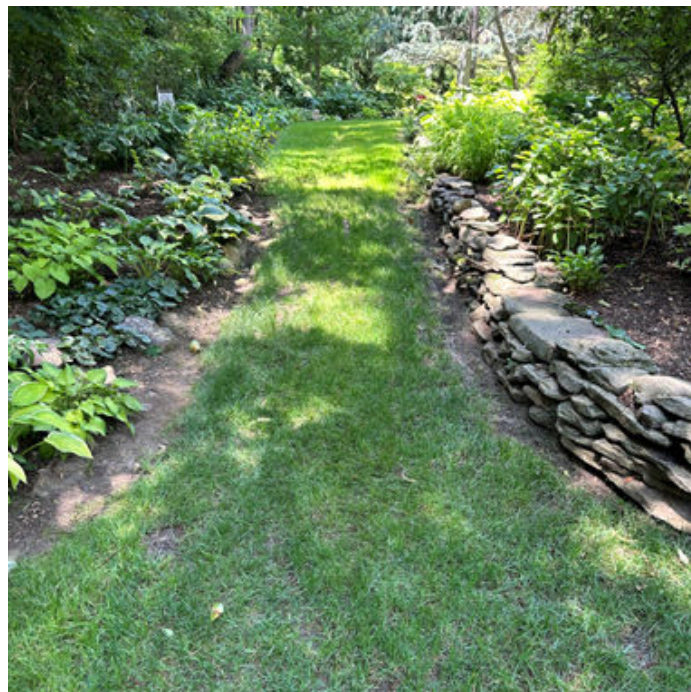
Carefully planned pathways separate the planting beds, some paved with stone but mostly grass.



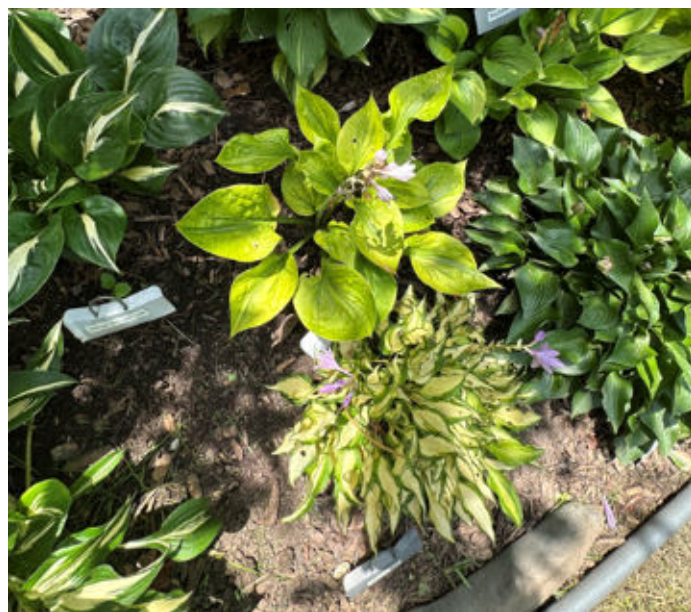
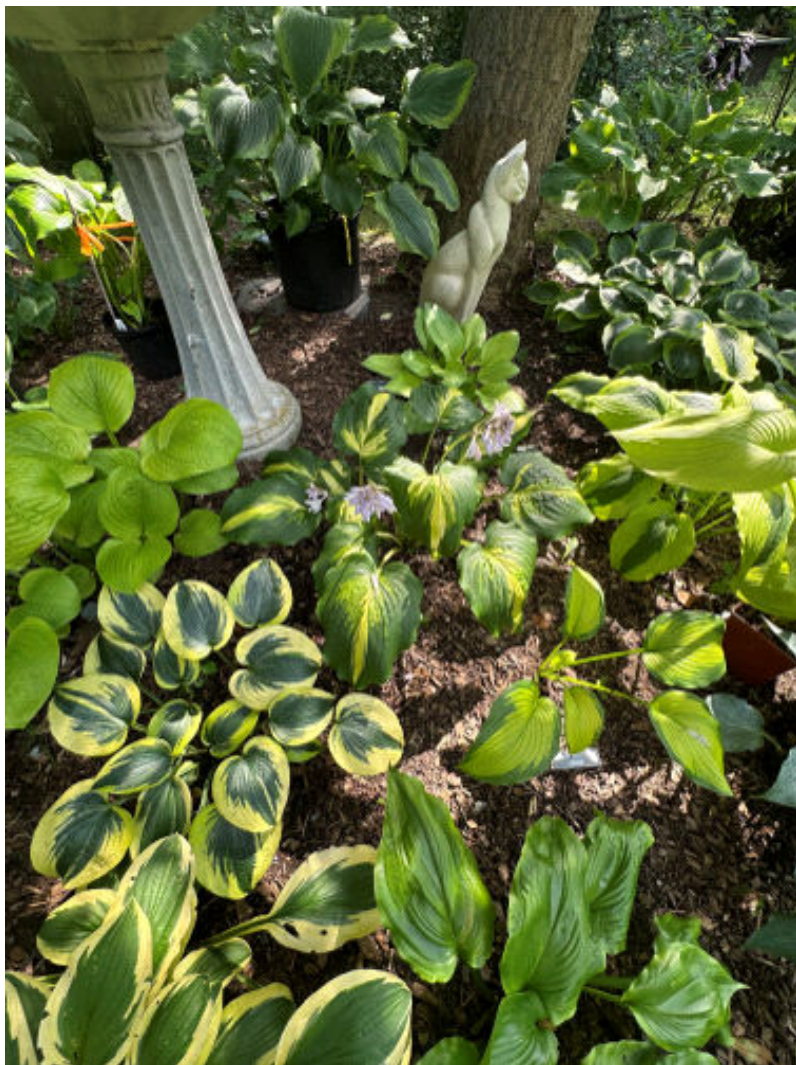


Many destinations have signs proclaiming, “Keep off the Grass!”, but it is exactly the opposite here. While there is a small area of open space, the grass serves as the walking paths and is sparse in areas due to traffic and shade. Dave is experimenting in one area with a mesh product to encourage grass growth.

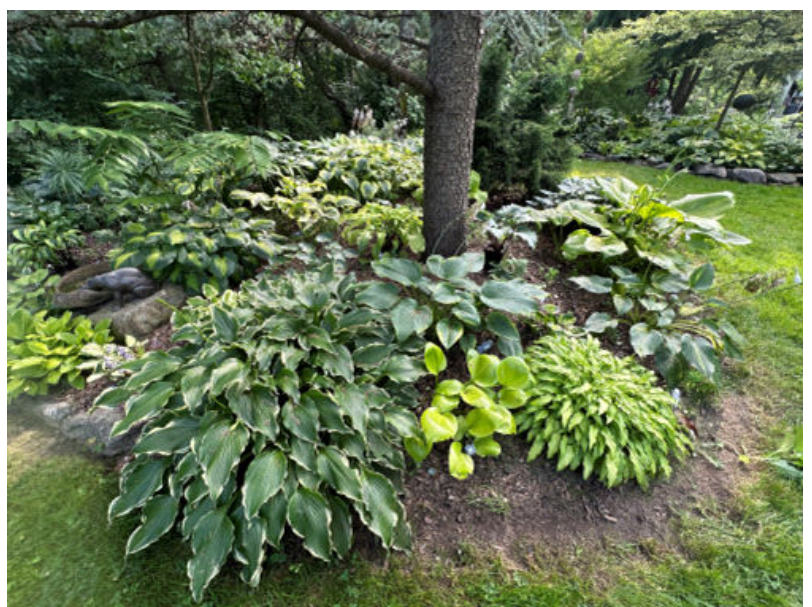
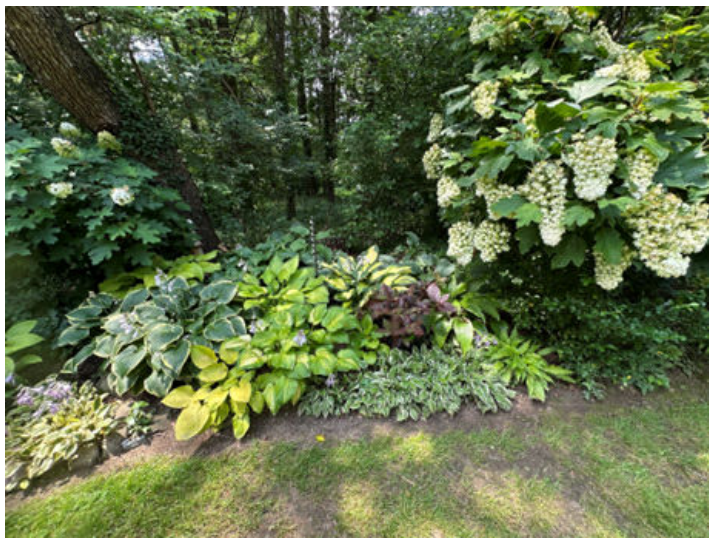




Below, a cat statue stands tall in the garden guarding hostas including *H.* 'Embroidery', 'Autumn Frost', 'Three Coins', seedling "3-Way Streak" (garden name), *H.* 'Long Tall Sally', 'Goodness Gracious', 'Typhoon', and 'Sand Storm'.

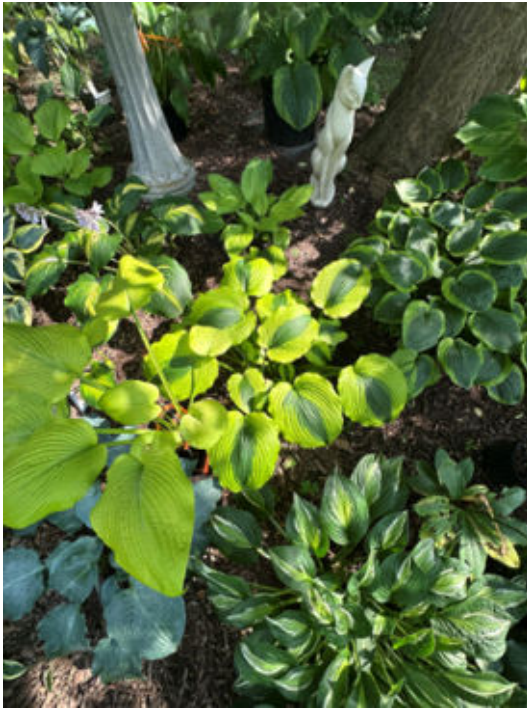
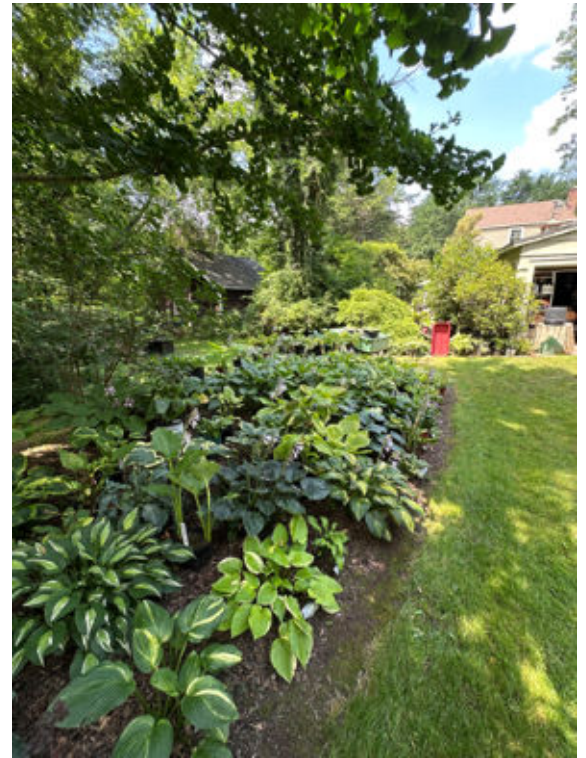


H. 'Fresh Mint', surrounded by *H.* 'Ocean Isle Tide Line', 'Radiant Star', 'Vanilla Bean', and 'Ocean Isle Tie Dye'.



Above, *H.* 'Gifted', now available for purchase at In The Country Garden and Gifts, was introduced by the Chopkos. It is a streaked sport of 'Powder Blue'. (Photo Courtesy of In the Country.)

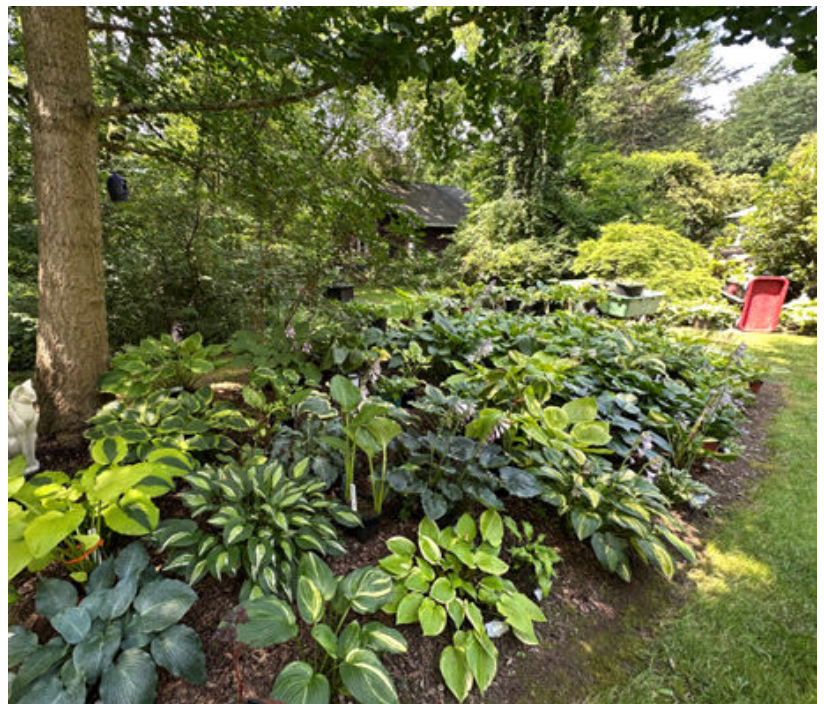


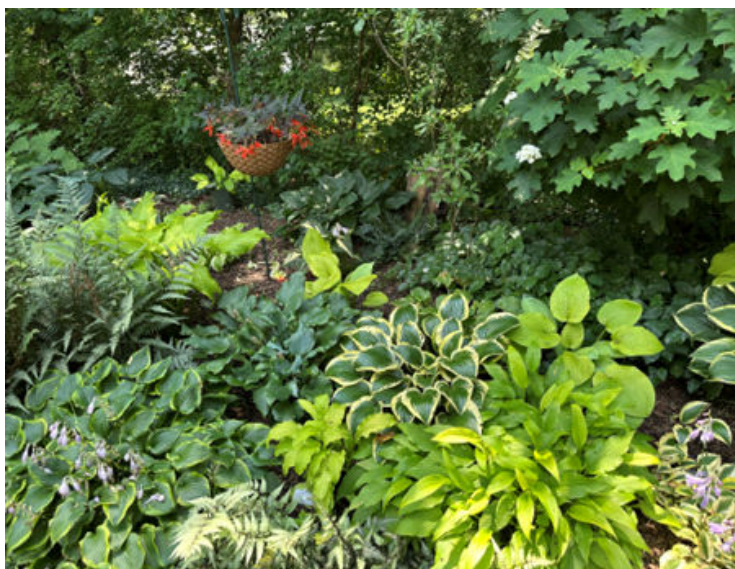


A seedling of *H.* 'Chinese Dragon' that Dave has given a garden name of '3-Way Streak'.

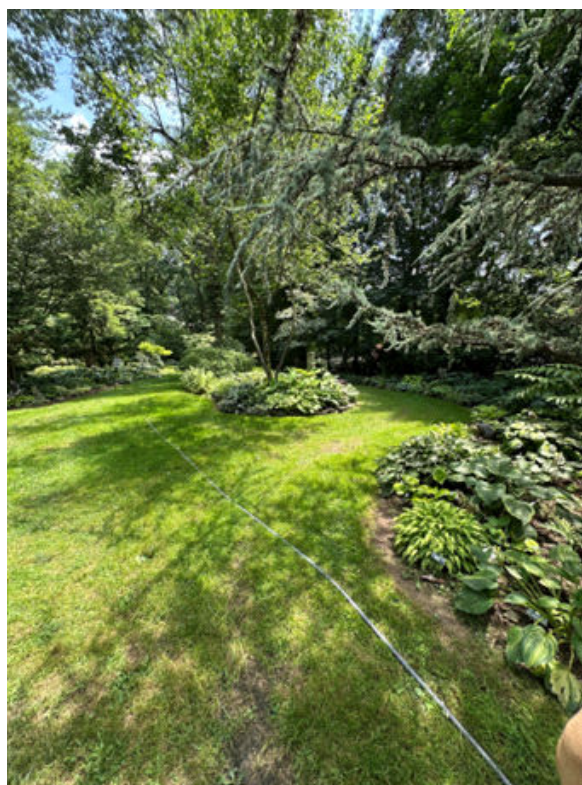


H. 'Snake Eyes Plus'

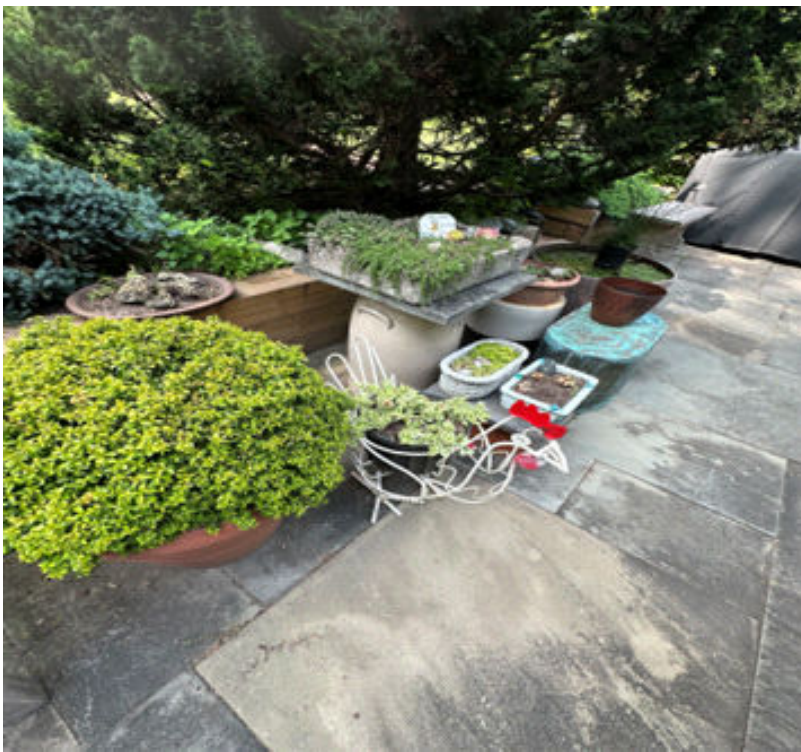
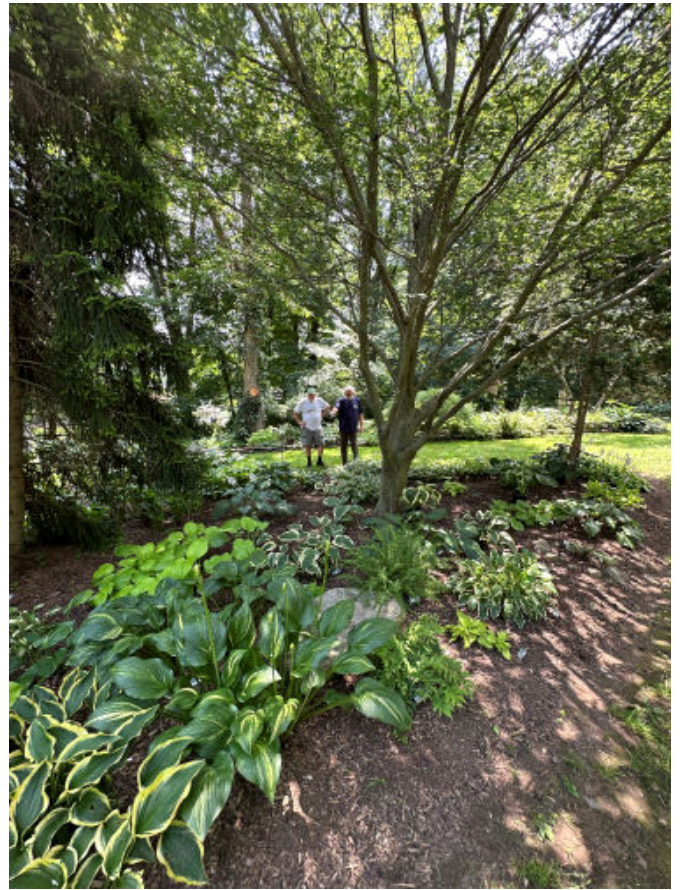




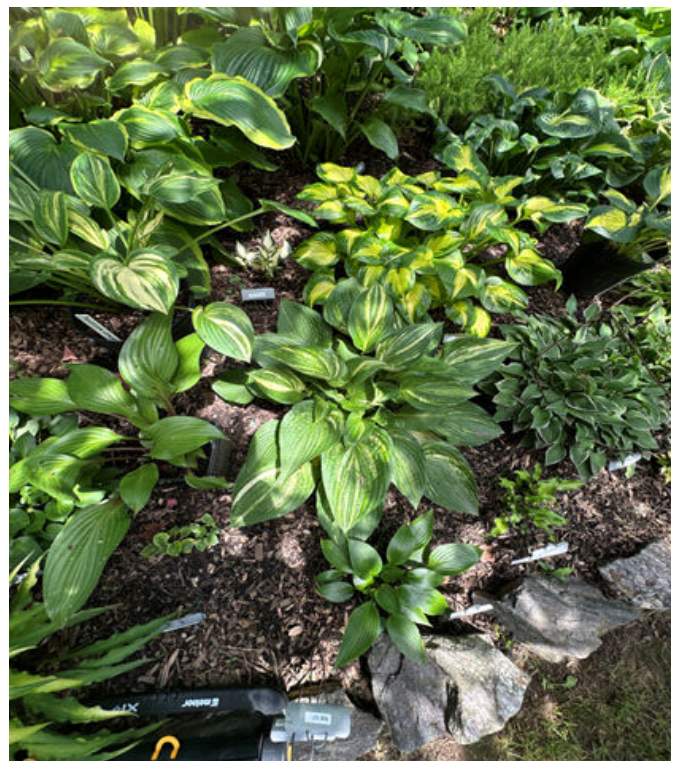
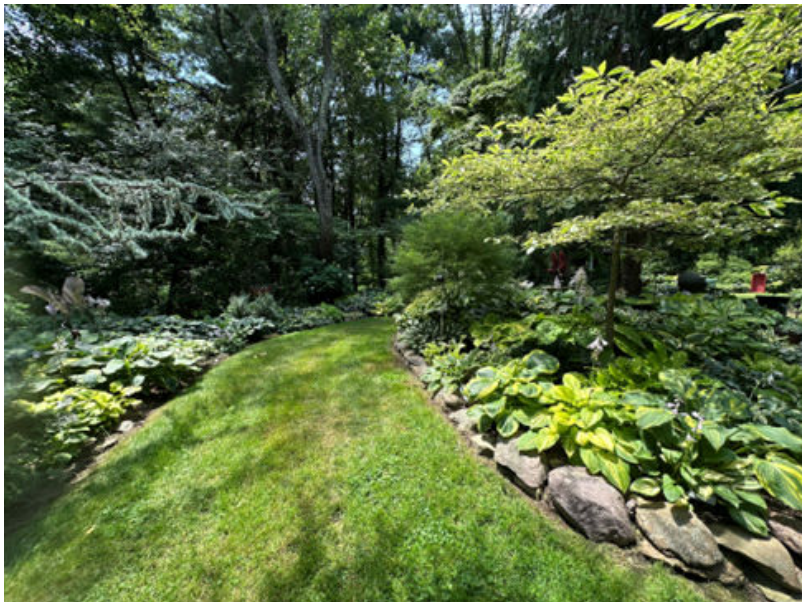
H. 'White Sprite' and 'Stitch in Time' brighten up this area.

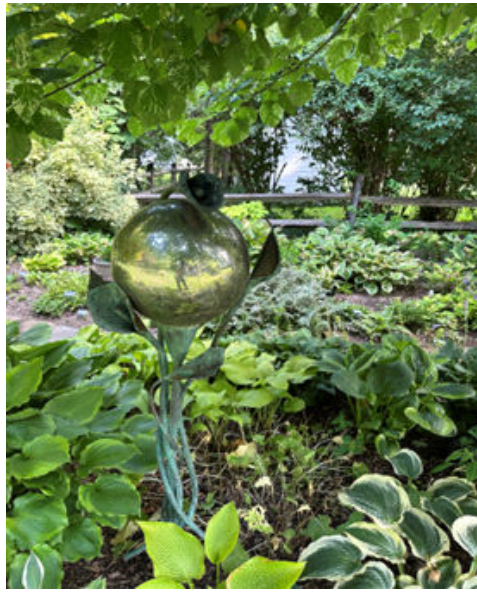


Left, clockwise from bottom left: *H.* 'Three Coins', 'Dandy Lion', 'Long Tall Sally', 'Purple Rain', 'Summer Joy', 'Lightning Flash', 'Winter Lightning', 'Giantland Mouse Cheese', 'Simply Irresistible', 'Pinot Grigio' and 'Rumor Has It' in the center.

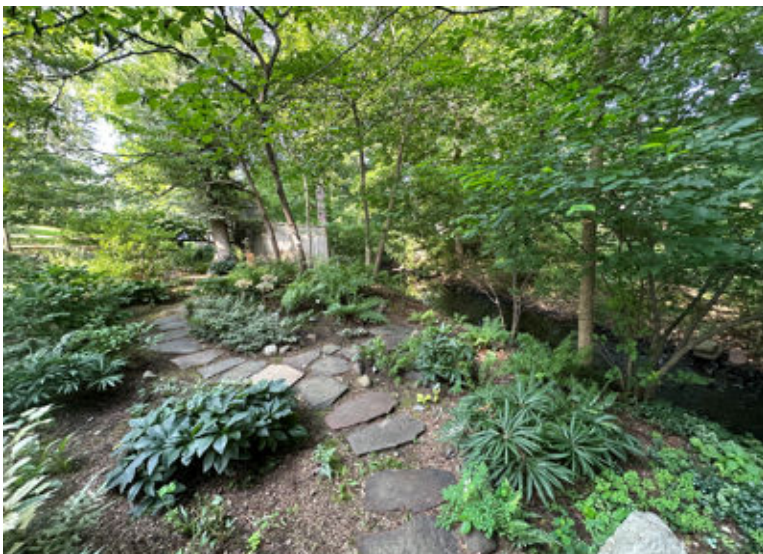


Below, a colorful assortment including *H.* 'William Lachman', 'Etched Glass', and 'Fame Game'.





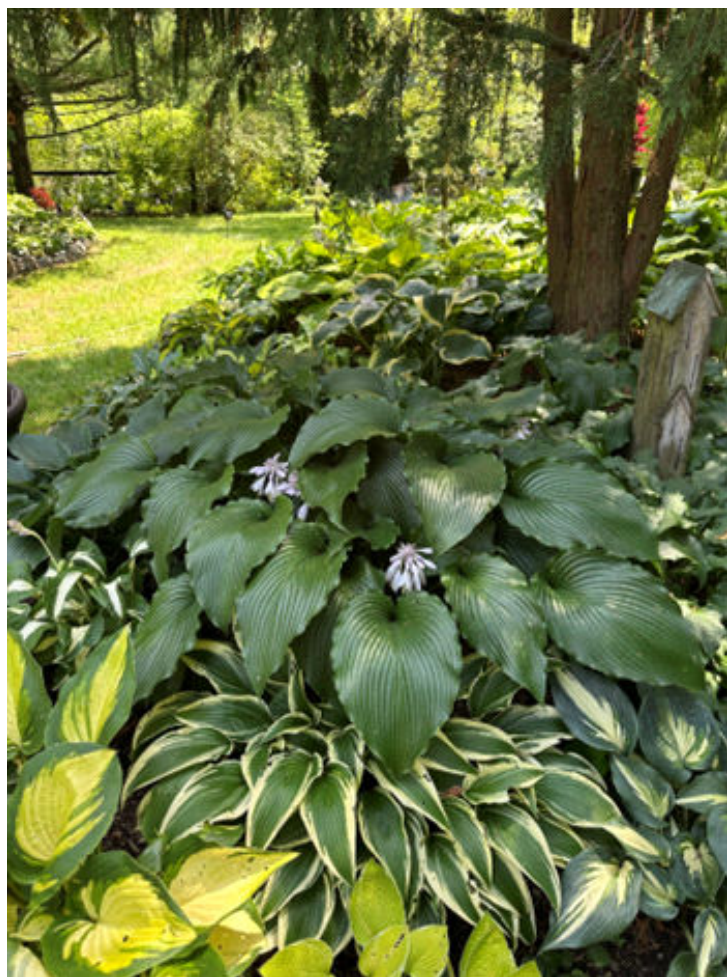
Clockwise from left: *H. kiyosumiensis* 'Seiryu', 'Leather and Lace', 'Ocean Isle Twist and Shout', 'Little Town Flirt', 'Little Squirt', 'X-rated', and 'Neutrino'.



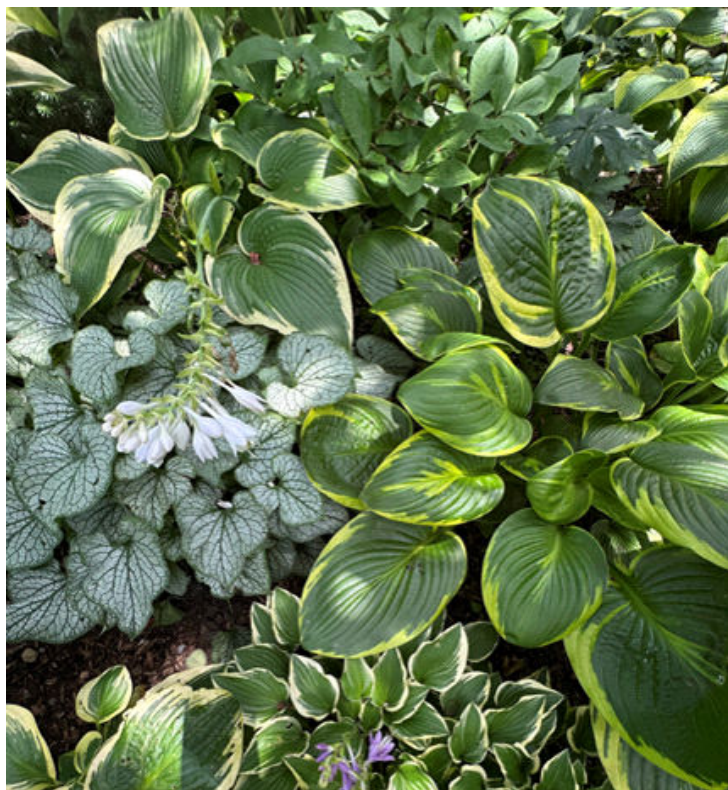
This bed features *H.* 'Dorset Clown', 'Bear Claw', 'Jumpin' Jack Flash' and 'Frosted Frolic'.



An assortment of metal garden art, including this iridescent butterfly, brightens up many of the planted beds.



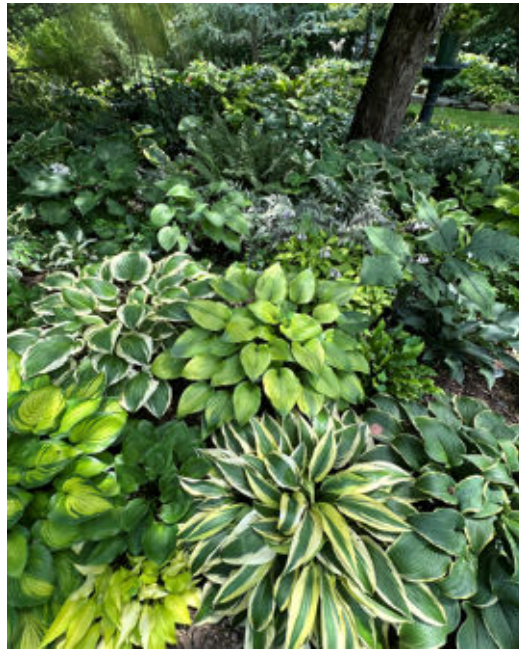
The trees create the shade necessary for hostas to thrive, while the sun shines bright on the grassy areas.



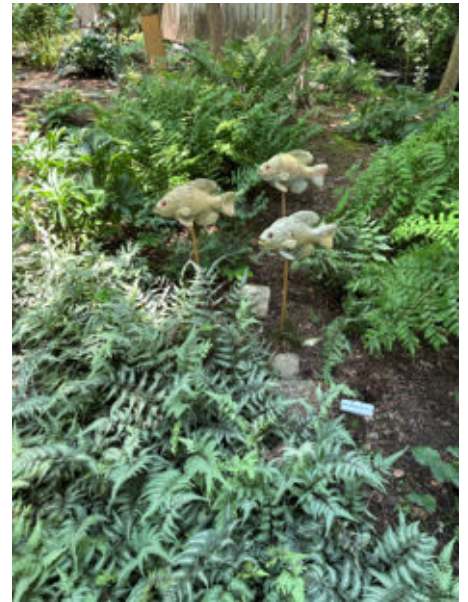
Brunnera and *Helleborus* fill in space behind *Hosta* 'My Fine Feathered Friend'.



Clockwise from bottom right: *H.* 'Curly Fries', 'Shaboom Shaboom', 'Valley's Chute the Chute', 'Island Breeze', 'Danubie Isla', 'William Lachman'.



Combining hostas that have different shaped leaves, different colored leaves and varying sizes creates an exciting hosta display that draws the eye.



The addition of fish gives the appearance they are swimming through the sea of painted ferns.



Polygonatum odoratum 'Fireworks' blends seamlessly with *Hosta* 'Swoosh' and painted ferns.



Polygonatum odoratum 'Byakko' glows in the shade amidst the hostas.



Left, *Asplenium scolopendrium* 'Cristata'.



Dryopteris filix-mas 'Linearis Polydactyla' is planted alongside hellebore and carex.



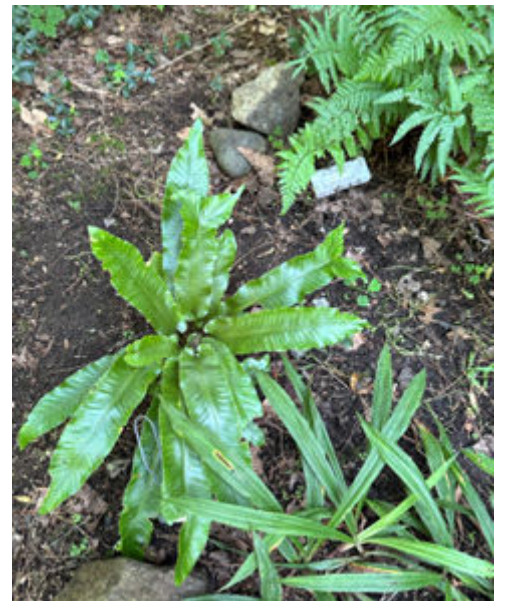
Hostas, ferns, Solomon's seal, hellebores and other shade tolerant perennials complement each other's shape and texture to complete the landscape.



Asplenium x ebenoides 'Dragon Tail'



Athyrium filix-femina 'Dre's Dagger', a gift from good friend Don.



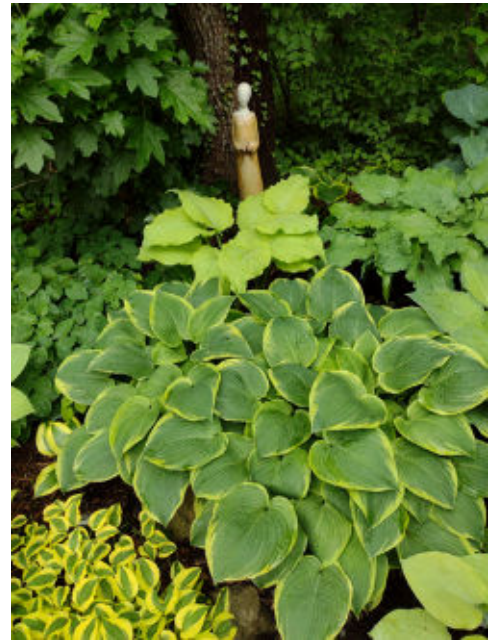
Phyllitis scolopendrium



Athyrium filix-femina 'Victoriae'



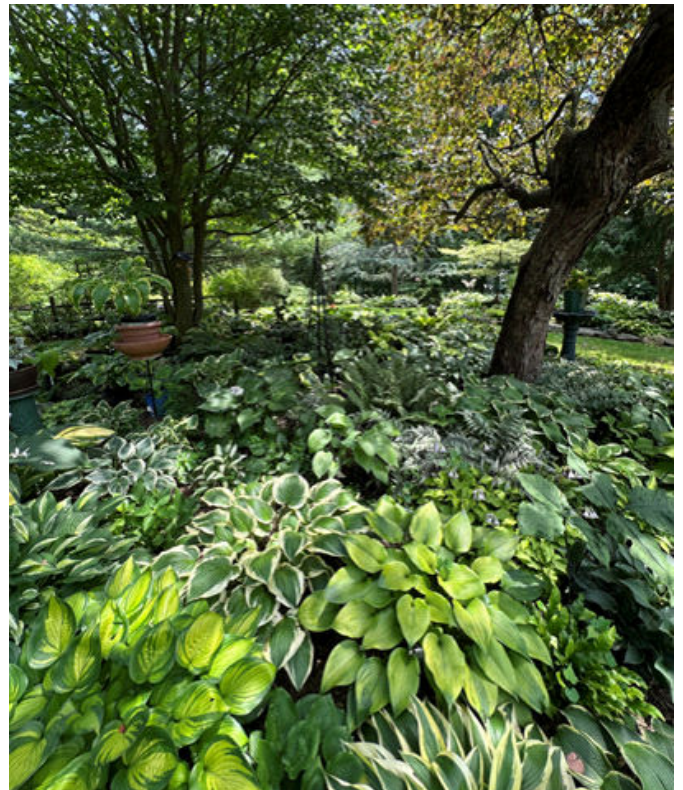
Polystichum setiferum 'Herrenhausen'



Left, Hosta 'Warwick Curtsey'.



Utilizing plant stands and pedestals in the garden creates new levels of interest and focus, while it also increases the number of hostas you can display in the same footprint. Metal art and statuary can create the same effect.



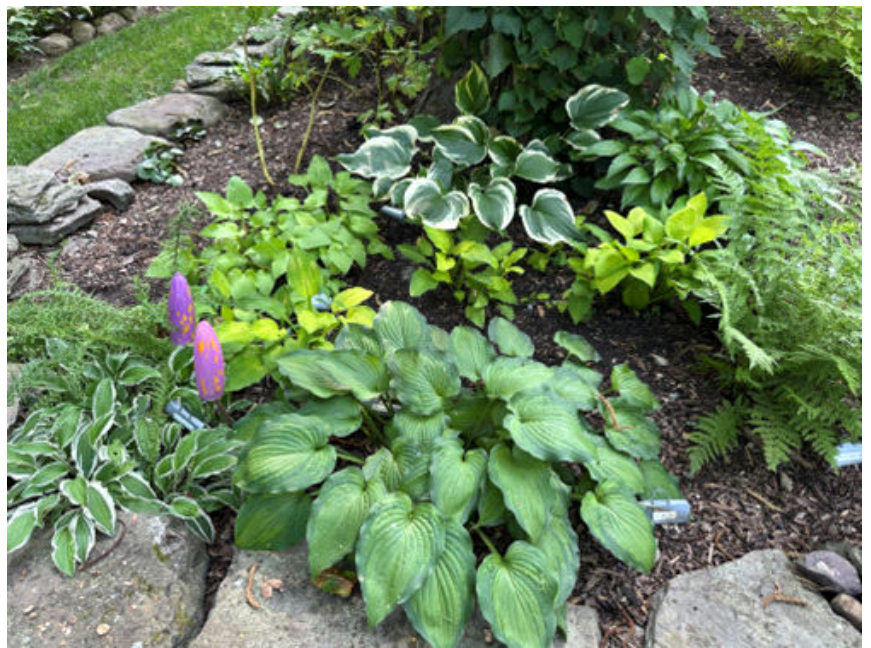


H. 'Snake Eyes', takes center stage in this bed, with colorful hostas surrounding it.

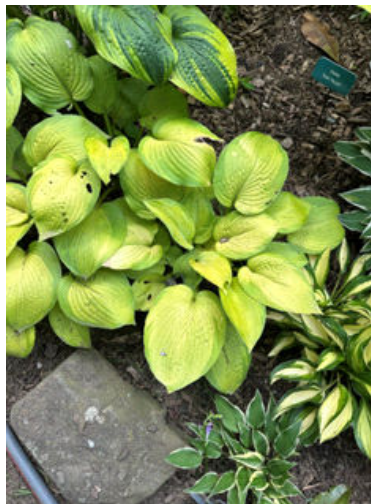


Hosta 'Sunshine Floozie'

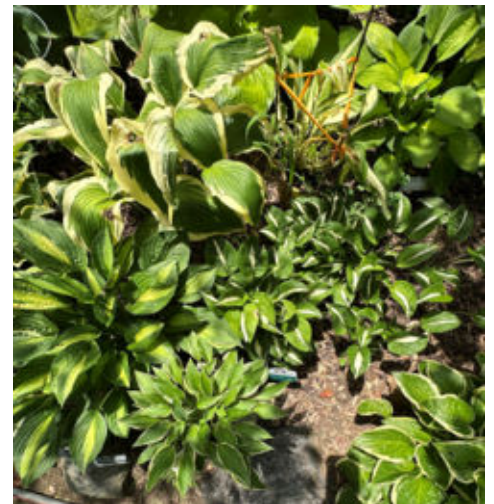
Left, *H.* 'Octonaut'.



H. 'Venetian Beauty', 'Lemon Drop', and *Hosta ventricosa* 'Aureomarginata', brighten the area next to *Thelypteris limbosperma*.



H. 'Dave' in the center, was named for Dave by his good friend Bob Kuk.



,Dave has grouped his originations together in the garden, including *H.* 'Ocean Isle Twist and Shout', 'Gold Standard' streaked sport, and 'Ocean Isle Tide Line'.





H. 'How About That!'



H. 'Misty Gold'



H. 'Ocean Isle Tide Line'



H. 'Osiris Obscur' makes a large statement in this mixed border.



H. 'Lemontini' streaked sport.



H. 'Pin Prick'



H. 'Totally Awe Sum'



H. Time Traveler'



H. 'Lightning Flash'



H. 'American Hero'



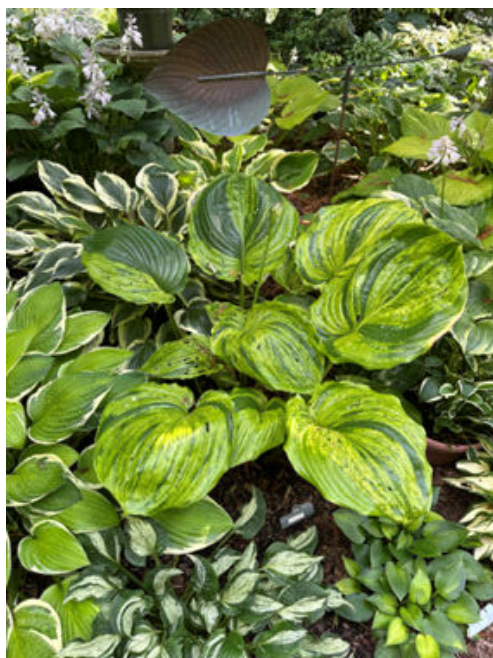
Carex 'Moon Falls'



Hosta 'Uprising'



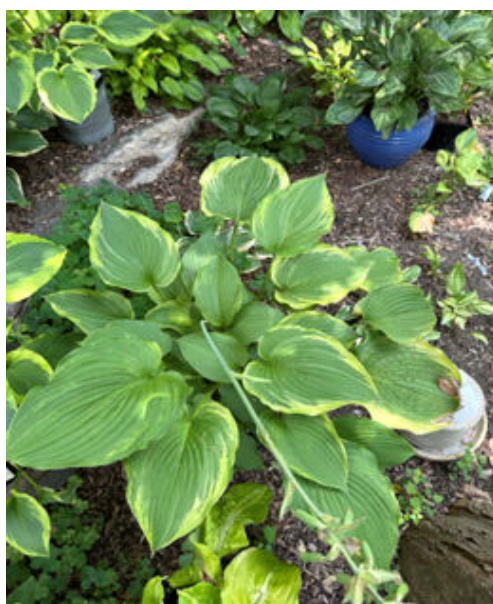
H. 'Alley Oop'



H. 'Gunther's Prize'



H. 'My Fine Feathered Friend'



H. 'Chinese Dragon' streaked sport.



H. 'Mouseketeer'



H. 'Show Me's Twisted Sister'



H. 'Queen Jane', and right, 'Friendly Persuasion'.



H. 'What's Mine is Yours', a gift from good friend Jack Barta.



H. 'Here's Lookin' Atcha', the winner of the 2024 Meyers Award.



H. 'Marshmallow Sky'



H. 'Pinot Grigio'



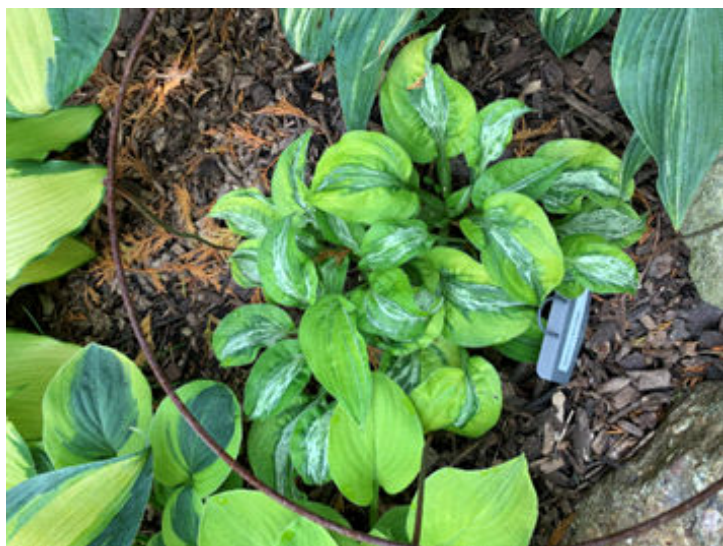
H. 'Ocean Isle Tie Dye'



H. 'Hans'

Right center, *H.* 'Cathy's Clown', with 'Midnight Oil' and 'Lakeside Sparkle Plenty' sport.





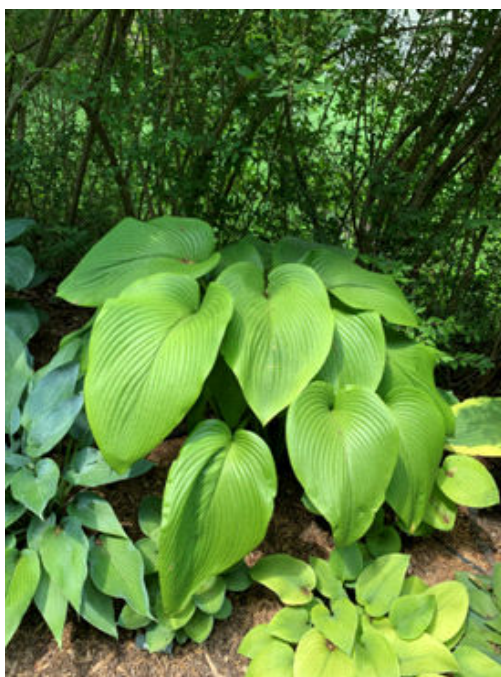
H. 'Winter Lightning'



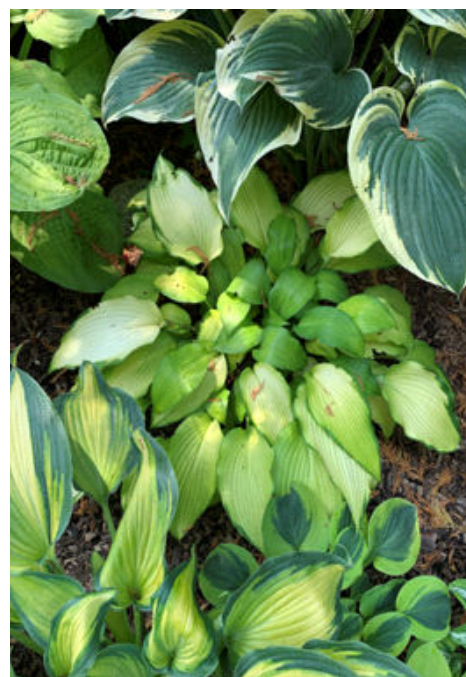
H. 'Chirifu Oba'



H. 'Crumples'



Center, *H. 'Emerald Cascade'*.



Center, *Hosta 'Rumor Has It'*.



H. 'Pandemonium'



H. 'Snake Eyes Plus'



H. 'Tokyo Smog'



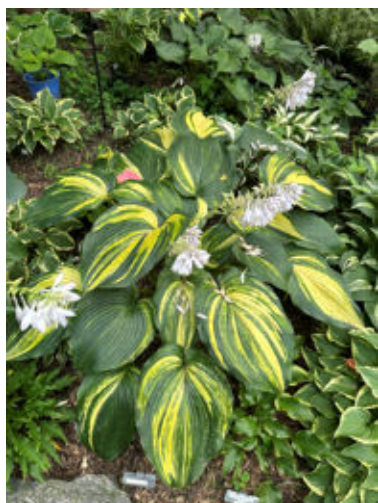
H. 'Blue Striptease'



H. 'Rime Ice'



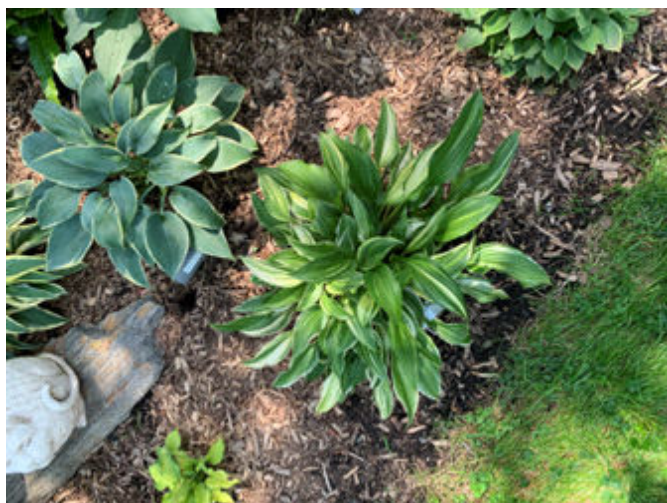
H. 'Tapestry'



H. 'Kiwi Milky Way'



H. 'Sharp Dressed Man'



H. 'Boogie Woogie', with 'Frosted Dimples' on the left.



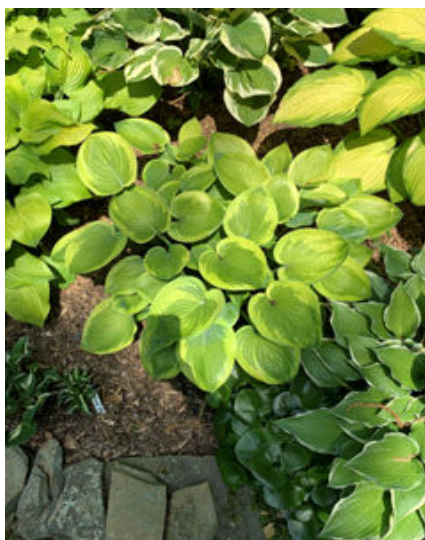
H. 'Ocean Isle Abracadabra'



H. 'Bizarre'



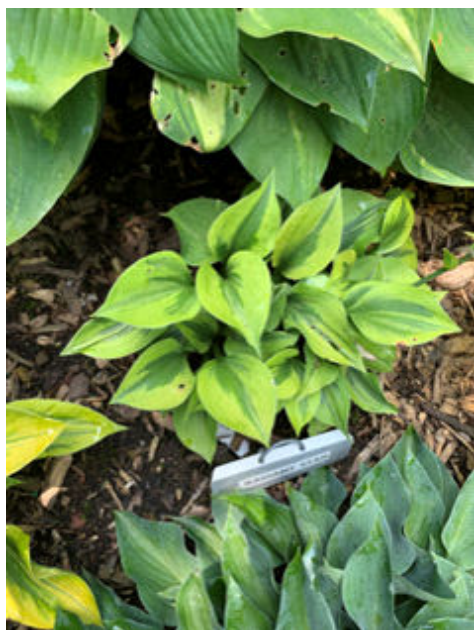
H. 'Golden Delight'



Center, *H.* 'Miss Mykah'.



H. 'Phoenix Feathers'



H. 'Radiant Star'



H. 'Fire Dancer'



H. 'Confused Angel'



H. 'Myland'



H. 'Tassels'



H. 'Neon Lights'



H. 'Hypnosis'



Center, *Hosta* 'Winfield Mist'.



The gorgeous flowers and scapes on *H. 'Navajo'* make a statement in the garden.

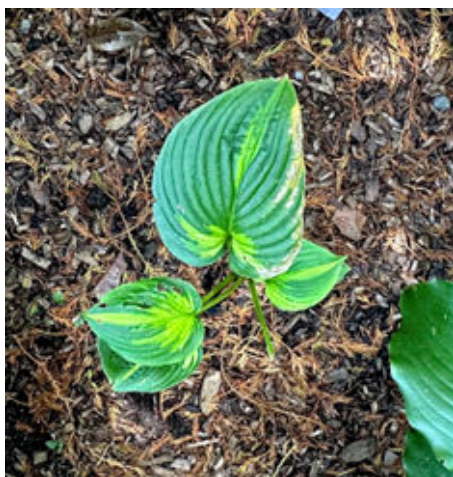
Polygonatum odoratum 'Dai Koga' complements hostas in the shade garden.



Center, *H. 'Winfield Mist'*.



H. 'Bailey's Cream'



H. 'Chief Crazy Horse'



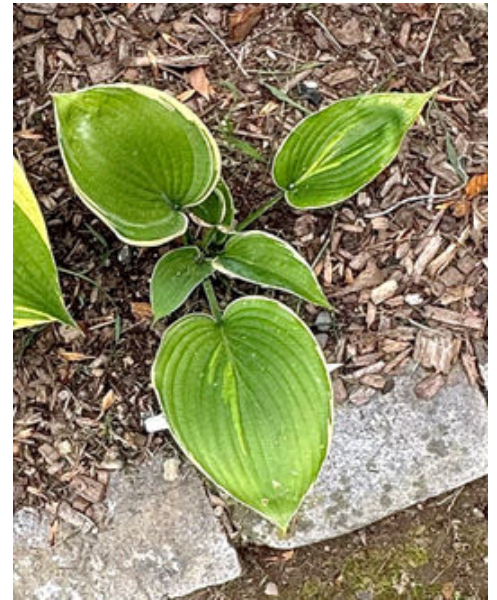
Center, *H. 'Rootin Tootin'* streaked sport.



H. 'Jack Berry'



H. 'Cute as a Button'



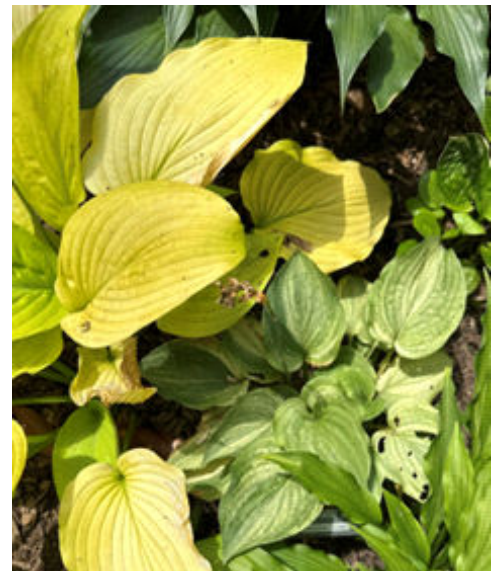
H. 'Jersey Girl'



Rhodea japonica 'Striped Delights'



Clockwise from bottom right: *Hosta* 'Broad Street', 'Twice as Mice', 'Jim Cooper', 'Cream Topping'.



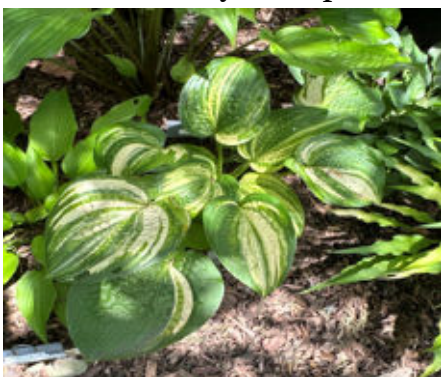
H. 'Vermont Frost', with 'Kasseler Gold'.



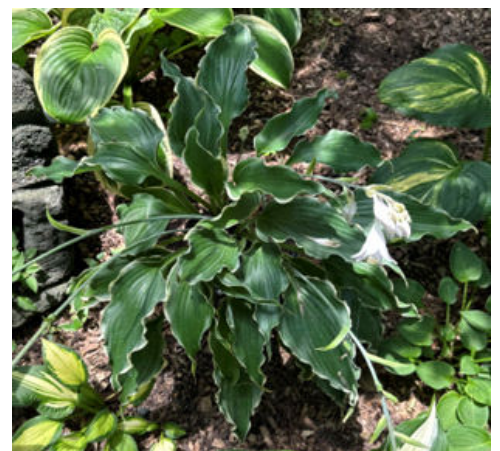
H. 'Ray of Hope'



The Five-Leaf Aralia (*Eleutherococcus sieboldianus* 'Variegatus') is a beautiful hosta companion.



H. 'Shaboom Shaboom'



Hosta. 'Dancing in the Moonlight'



H. 'Hot Kiss'



H. 'Waiting in Vein' brightens up the patio display.



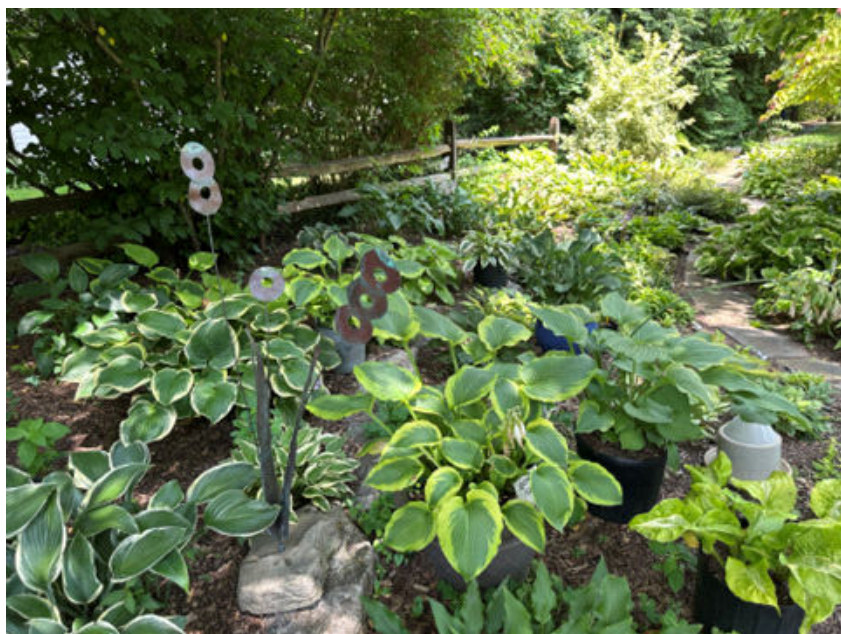
The purple leaves of *Calycanthus 'Burgundy Spice'* add a pop of color to the hostas to draw the eye.



Dave enjoys sharing his love of hostas and will often be seen digging a hosta up during your visit to share a division with you.



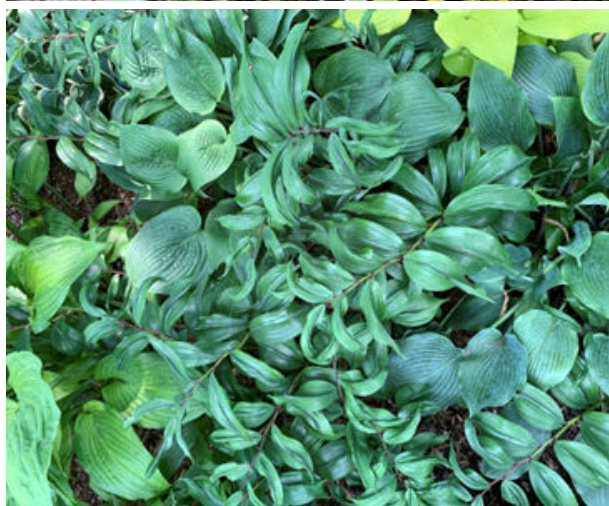
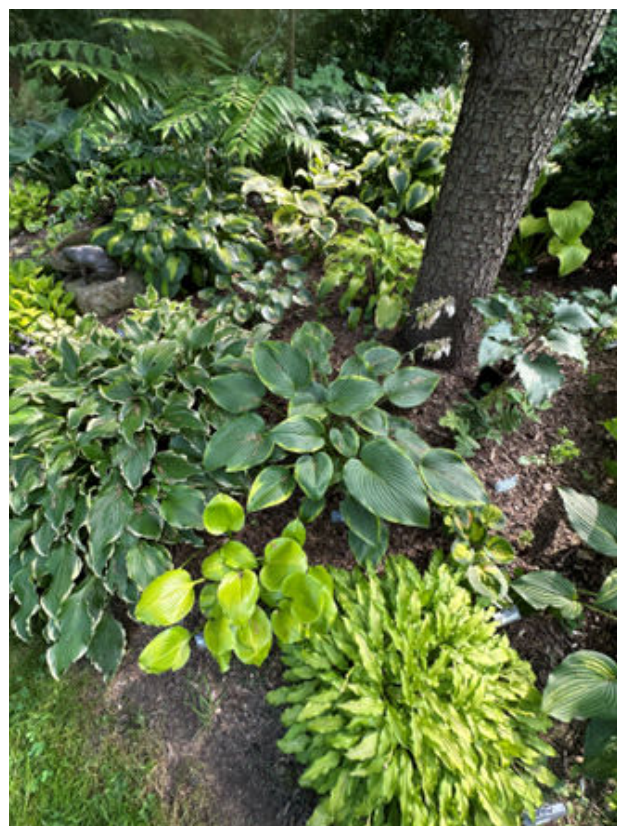
Hosta 'Emperor's New Clothes' stands tall behind 'Frog in my Throat', 'White Lightning' and an unnamed seedling.



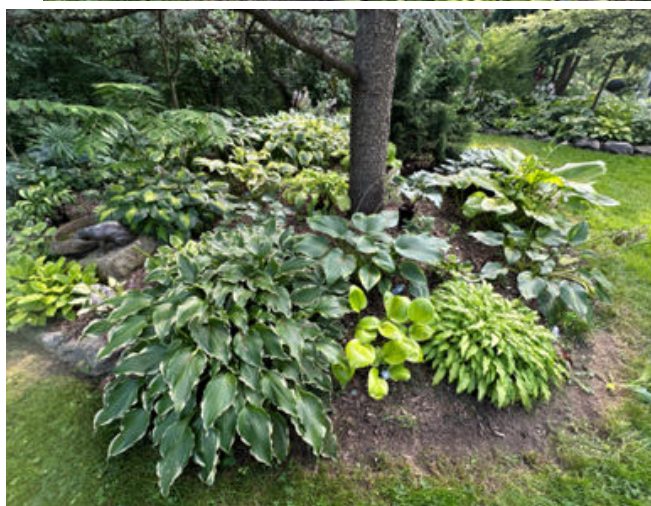
Right center,
H. 'Dorset
Clown'.

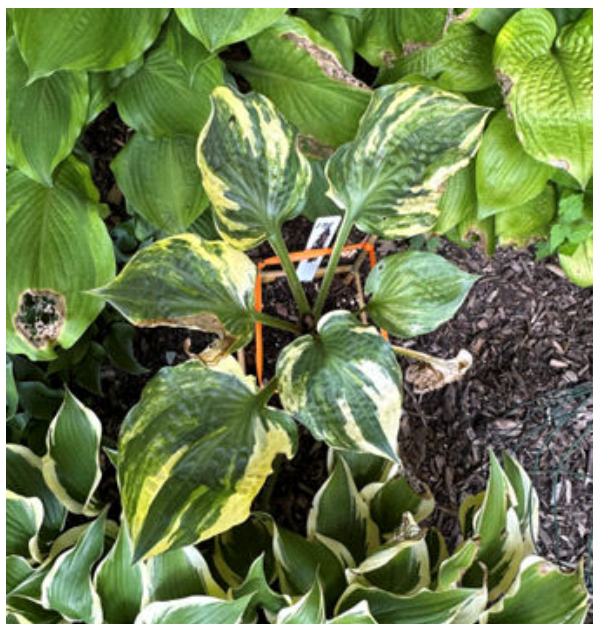


As new hostas arrive, the potted collection grows! Dave has filled the shelves, so potted hostas are placed amidst the hostas planted in the ground, which allows them to blend with pots unseen.

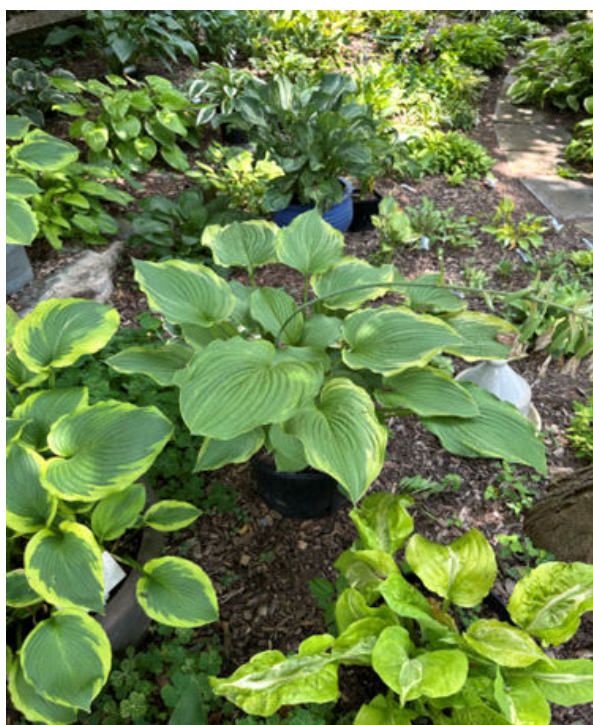


Left, hostas pair nicely with *Polygonatum odoratum* 'Koryu' in the shady garden, with contrasting leaf shapes providing interest.

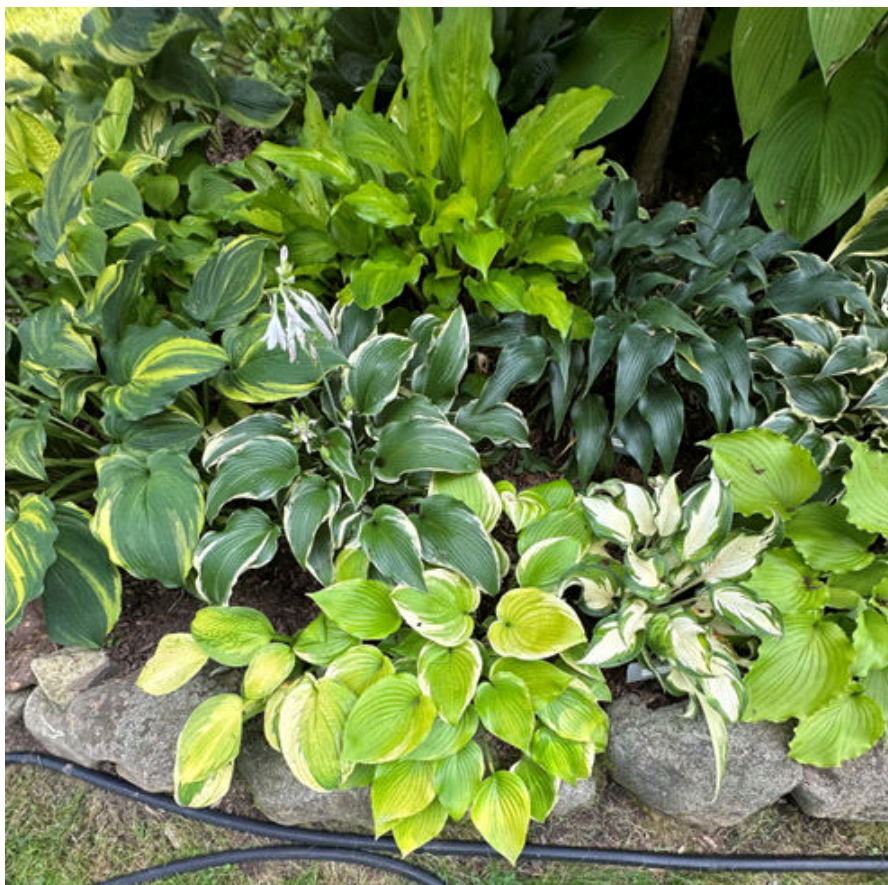




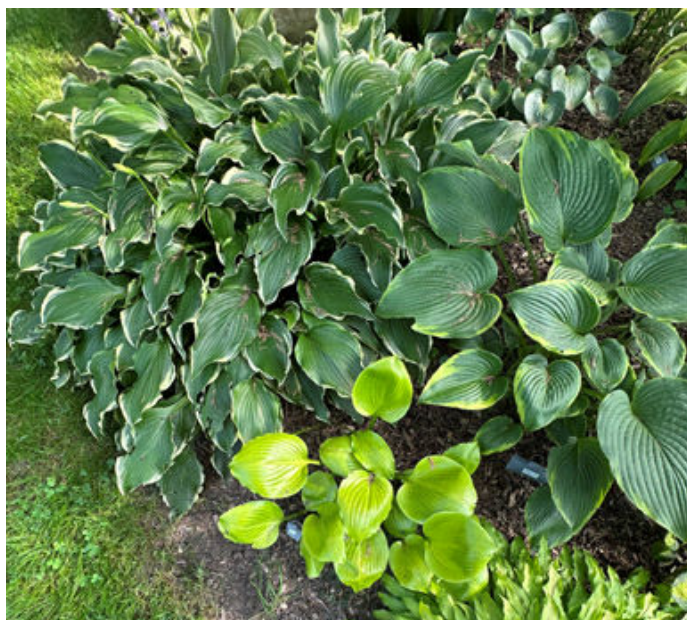
Above, an unnamed Doug Beilstein seedling sits in its pot waiting for its seat in the garden. Dave has many unnamed seedlings gifted by the many prestigious visitors to the garden.



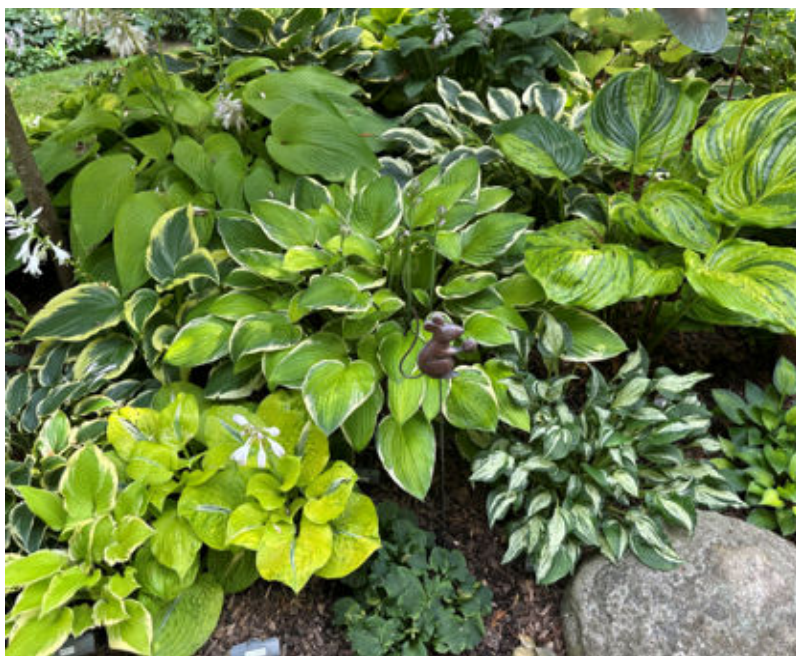
In the foreground left to right: *Hosta* 'Ocean Isle', 'Chinese Dragon' streaked sport, 'Totally Awe Sum'.



Clockwise from left: *H.* 'Entranced', Chopko hosta seedling, 'Tilt a Whirl', 'Childhood Sweetheart', 'Jessica Alba', 'Marshmallow Sky', 'Lemontini' streaked sport, 'Boracay', 'Emma'.



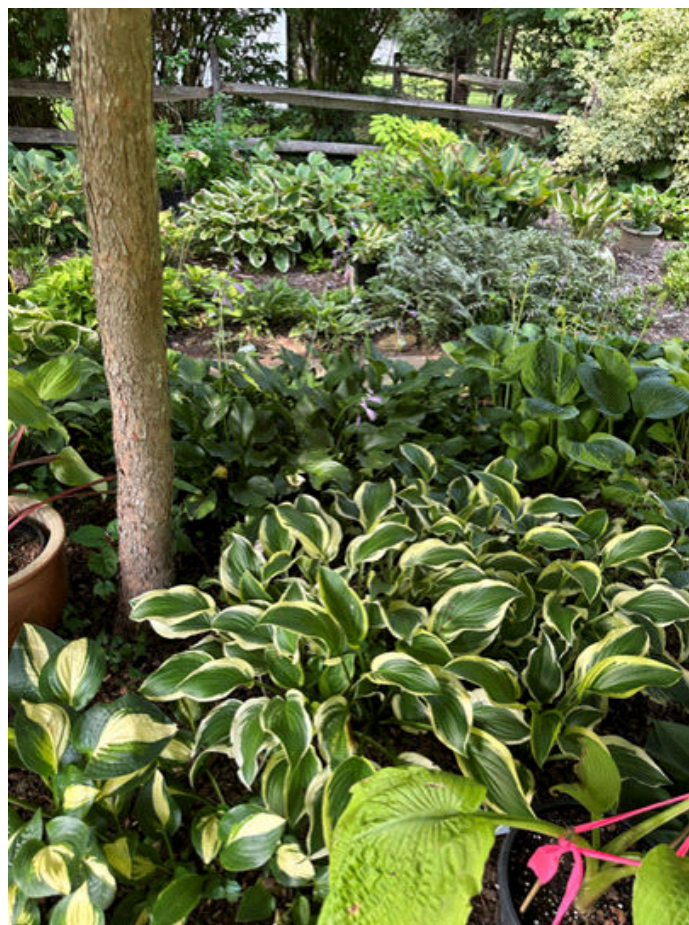
H. 'Jaz' glows in the foreground. A seedling of 'Sum and Substance', this tetraploid is also lutescent, meaning it emerges green and brightens to yellow to command your attention with its thick, shiny leaves.



Clockwise from bottom left: *H.* 'Lakeside Tee Ki', 'Pearly Gates', 'Chief Yellow Head', 'Gunther's Prize', 'Alley Oop', 'Church Mouse', 'Time Traveler'



H. 'Midnight Oil' is instantly recognizable as the darkest one surrounded by hostas including 'Bizarre', 'Wheee!', 'Rachel', 'Chief Yellow Head', 'Imperial Moth', and 'Fred Wilson'.

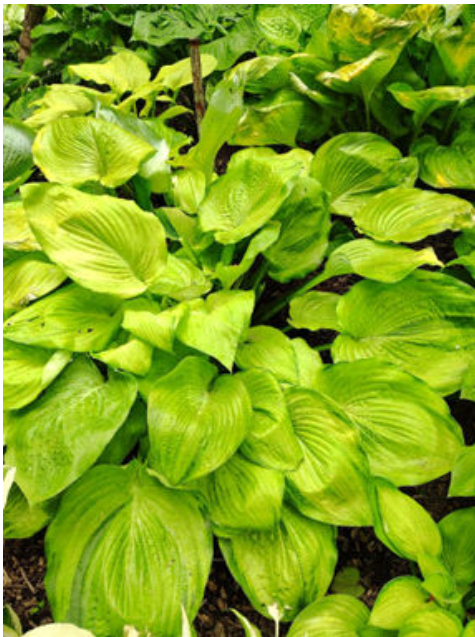




H. 'Whirly Everlasting'

In the foreground, *H. 'Alley Oop'*, *'Rio Oro'* and *'Gunther's Prize'* form a dazzling display.

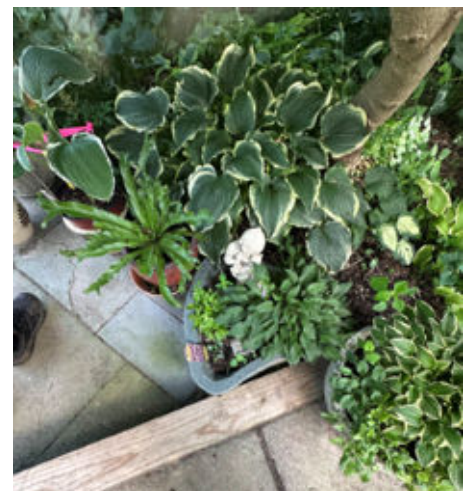
H. 'Continental Divide' will fill this area in with a bright pop of color.

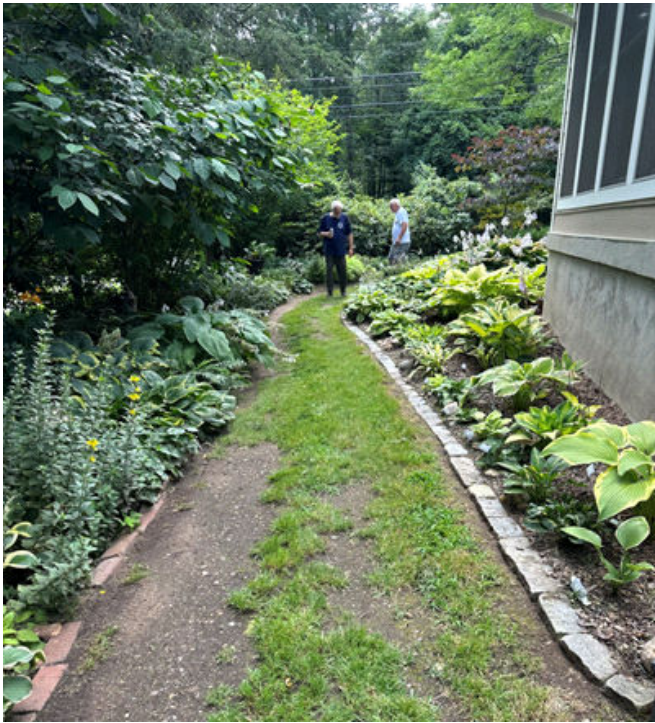


H. 'Meringue' is centered amidst many of its sports.



Roberta is adept at creating hypertufa planters and many of her creations adorn the patio, along with other troughs and bowls she has expertly planted.





The side of the house is very shaded, making it the perfect site for growing Roberta's fern and yet also sunny enough for Dave's hostas to thrive.



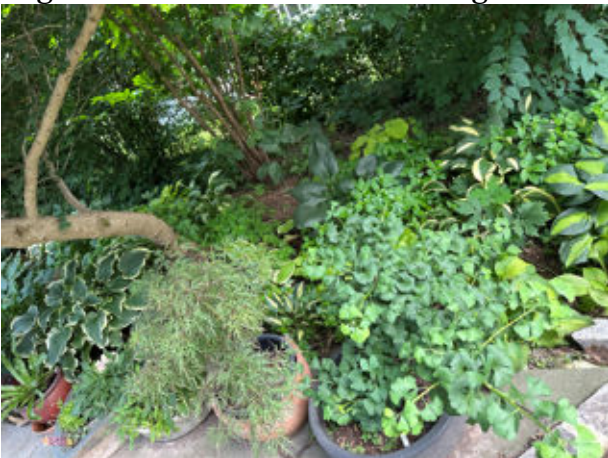
There is a small pond with goldfish on the edge of the patio that has to remain covered with mesh to keep herons from preying on them.



There are many seating areas in the garden but when there is a group meeting in the garden, which is a yearly occurrence, visitors bring their own chairs to sit on the grass.



A nicely hardscaped patio area offers a retreat from the garden, where Roberta offers refreshments to guests.



Right, a cute ferris wheel spins around displaying miniature potted hostas.

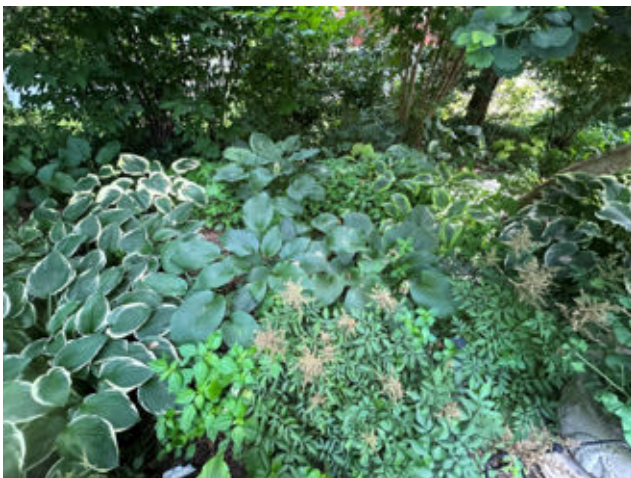
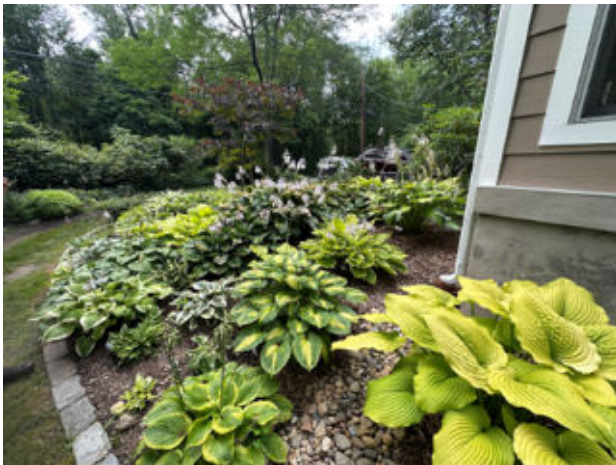




Roberta enjoys reading and her favorite spot is sitting in their enclosed sun porch.



Miniature hostas and other small plants are displayed in a variety of troughs and small planters near the home.



Visitors often overlook the landscape in front of a house, but the worn paths around this house are proof that this front yard is walked frequently, and these photos show exactly why it's worth visiting.

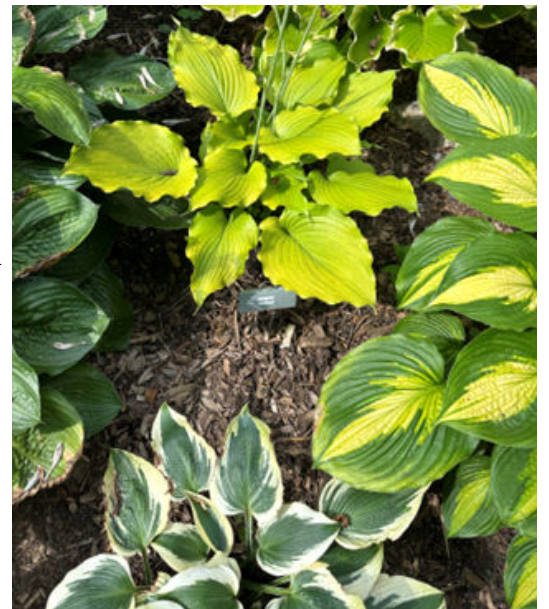




H. ‘Cat in the Hat’ is surrounded by hostas including ‘Foxfire Viper’, ‘Effervescence’, ‘Emma’, ‘Don Quixote’ and ‘Chris’ A Lalalala Long’.



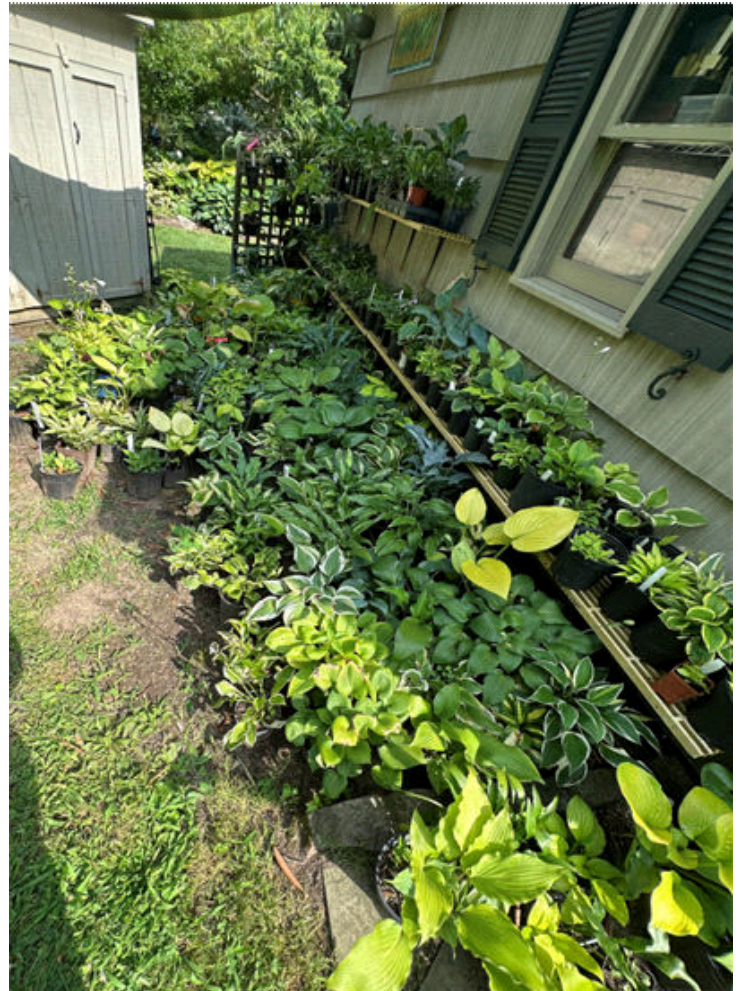
Right, *H.* ‘Firm Line’, ‘Sherlock’ and ‘Cornbelt’.



Rocks are used to create the illusion of a dry riverbed where the house gutter drains, but the hostas don’t mind, as evidenced by the multitude of flowers!



The antique fence section used to decorate the side of the potting shed belonged to Dave's father and it is one of the first things you see entering the garden.



The side of the shed has become the backbone of the shelving that holds many of the potted hostas.



Above, Dave has amassed such a large collection of hostas that he does not have enough ground to plant them in, and he has found that they grow just as well in pots! When he ran out of space on the shelves, he began placing them on top of the ground amidst the planted hostas, and you can hardly see the pots.

This interview was conducted and compiled by Gail J Russo, Cedarville, NJ.

If you would like to see your garden or the garden of a friend featured in this publication, please contact Gail Russo at Russo4@comcast.net for the application questionnaire.

All the photos printed in this column have been provided by the featured gardener with their permission, unless otherwise noted, and are the property of the featured gardener, so contact them if you'd like permission to use a photo.

We are trying to bring lovely, remote gardens to the readers who would not be able to see them otherwise and get to know the person behind them.

International hosta gardeners are encouraged to join us. We would love to meet you and enjoy your gardens, but you must communicate in English.



Vendor Spotlight

Gail Russo, Cedarville, New Jersey

VENDOR SPOTLIGHT

In The Country Garden & Gifts

This is Hosta Country!

Innovative Hostas & Water Plants

Choice Shade Perennials, Succulents
Dwarf Conifers, Pond Supplies
Garden Gifts

Josh & Sue Spece
2587 Quasqueton Diag. Blvd.
Independence, IA 50644
319-934-3620 or 319-327-0927

www.inthecountrygardenandgifts.com



The Spece family: Joshua, Jackie, Jacob and Sue

I once overheard a comment spoken between two gardeners looking at a photo of the Spece family in front of their business. "They are all handicapped! How do they do it?" I thought it was a sad comment, and thought to myself, if you only knew! I try to feature the smaller, lesser-known vendors in this column, but this is an exception. I now have the opportunity to let everyone know how wrong it can be to assume anything based upon a simple photograph and to feature an amazing vendor whose story you may not be familiar with.

A "handicapped person" refers to an individual who faces a disadvantage because of a physical or mental impairment that limits their ability to perform a normal role in life. While this term was once common, it is now largely considered outdated and offensive by the disabled community, with "people with disabilities" or "disabled people" being preferred. It is considered outdated because it is dehumanizing. Some believe it implies a person is held back or cannot work, stemming from the historical practice of "hand-in-cap" begging. The term focuses on what a person can't do and the disadvantages they face, rather than on their individual identity or abilities. When you learn what this family has accomplished together, despite the odds, I'm hoping it makes you think twice before commenting without knowledge.

Sue Spece gave birth to three children who were all born with the same disorder. Spinal muscular atrophy is a genetic disorder that robs the spinal cord and brainstem of crucial motor neurons, causing the muscles to weaken as they are unable to communicate properly with the brain, and eventually atrophy. There was a 25% chance each child could develop the disorder based upon their parents' genetic makeup and it is not apparent upon birth. Most children afflicted typically become unable to walk and require a wheelchair to move about and assistance getting in and out of the wheelchair for bed. Sue cared for all three of her children in their home, with little assistance which was a daunting challenge. Despite the challenges facing them, Sue focused on their abilities rather than their disabilities and all three children have graduated college and have fascinating careers, as productive adults.

Jacob, the youngest, studied dairy science at Northeast Iowa Community College and co-operates two businesses. The first is a cattle operation named Johnston Creek Beef and the second is a metal art company named Country Vibe Designs. Jackie is the middle child, and she majored in health promotion and minored in dance at the University of Northern Iowa. She owns/operates the Heinz Academy for the Performing Arts, with two dance studios. Joshua, the eldest, studied horticulture at Hawkeye Community College, and with his mother Sue, they created In The Country Garden and Gifts.

Growing up, Josh was always fascinated with being outdoors, enjoying nature, animals and especially plants. He began gardening when Sue roped off a small corner of the family vegetable garden for his use. But he blames his grandmother for his hosta addiction! Her yard was very shady and in the '80s/'90s she purchased many hostas as they gained popularity. Near her job there was a small garden center that advertised weekly in the local newspaper, listing the new collector hostas they had available for sale. Josh caught "the bug" and every week he would send his grandmother a wish list of the hostas he'd like to have. At that time, *Hosta* 'Fragrant Bouquet', 'Great Expectations' and 'Elegans' were trendy varieties. Grandma being a typical grandmother, would fill his wish list and often bring a few more, just because!

One year, they visited the Dubuque Arboretum where he saw a gigantic specimen of *H. 'Sum and Substance'* for the first time. He decided then that he had to have one too and began searching for it. Eventually, he found it for sale at The Blooming Hill in Cedar Rapids. There he met the owner Jerry Hadrava, who would become known for his hosta introductions bearing the moniker "Rosedale." Josh had found a fellow hosta enthusiast, but he was unable to forge a relationship before the nursery closed its doors. For a while, his grandmother's hosta collection outnumbered his own. In the mid-90s, internet access exploded, and it opened up a whole new hosta world for Josh. Internet forums, chat groups and email discussions led to trading, secret swaps and get-togethers where he finally got to meet some of the online hosta friends he had made. It didn't take long before his hosta collection was bigger than Grandma's!

His hosta journey shifted gears after Josh graduated high school in 1998 and he started the nursery with his mother, Sue, on their homestead. When not caring for her three children, Sue was crafting, a hobby she practiced with her own mother, JoAnn Johnston. For 25 years, they traveled all over eastern Iowa selling their hand-crafted items at fairs and craft shows. Sue used her creative genes to fill the gift shop of the nursery with unique garden decor, statuary and homemade gifts. Josh sourced the plants and designed the gardens. In 2000, Josh graduated college with an AAS degree in horticulture, and this knowledge allowed him to expand the nursery with his love of unusual and unique varieties of plants. Hostas and water garden plants were the focus at their inception, but then they began to add succulents and rare perennials. Since he was young, Josh and Sue enjoyed water gardening together, and they brought in many varieties of aquatic plants to sell. Business was booming!

There are many people who made an impact not just in the business, but also personally, for Josh. He has many local hosta friends who drop by on any given day to chit chat for a while and he gets flack often about getting more socializing done than work! In particular, Don Dean has been a dear friend and strong supporter not only for Josh, but for

the entire family. He has supported them through good times and bad times. He helped kick-start their journey in working with hybridizers to bring their plants to market. Bob Solberg is someone Josh has looked up to from the early days of In The Country, from his many excellent hosta introductions and his endless hosta expertise, to his highly respected nursery reputation. The first time Bob visited, Josh recalls that he was a nervous wreck. After many return visits, he has come to be a great friend. Bob has been very generous with his plants, time, and knowledge over the years. His support means so much to Josh and his family.

Their home was not wheelchair friendly and three of its adult occupants were wheelchair bound. In 2011, they had an opportunity to be selected as the subject of the ABC TV series Extreme Makeover: Home Edition. However, they were not selected. The community became focused on their plight and launched a fundraising campaign they called “Building a Dream in the Country.” Over the course of three years, the drive raised more than \$226,000 in cash, with thousands of dollars more in donated goods and labor. The hosta community learned of the campaign and was responsible for approximately \$70,000 of that amount, through donations and auctions. The campaign used the funds to build a wheelchair friendly home for the Spece family on the property owned by Sue’s mother. The home features devices to aid in their care, including a ceiling mounted lift system to aid transfer from the wheelchairs.

They also moved the nursery to the property and built a new greenhouse and gift shop. Because JoAnn shared their love of gardening, they incorporated their plants into the gardens that already existed and expanded on them. The dairy/cattle farm operated by Jacob and their cousin is also located on this property, as is the building he creates the metal art in. When the storefront and nursery were rebuilt, they made sure there were no steps or steep inclines to navigate and left the corridors wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs. The gift shop/store/office opens directly into the first greenhouse. There is a second door that opens onto a back patio area between the two greenhouses, where you go to the second greenhouse, sun perennials, and hosta grow out area. The side door opens into the outdoor hosta retail area, which winds around behind the first greenhouse to the shade perennials and dwarf conifers. This layout allows Josh to navigate freely, interacting with the customers and allowing full view of the plants.





The “Building a Dream” fundraising campaign received enough money to build the home shown below with all necessary amenities. This allowed the family to focus on relocating the business shown on this page and the aerial photo below to the same property, since it is their source of income.

Fundraisers

The amount of money raised for this project is \$220,000. Thank you to all who helped make this a reality!

Thank you!

The Building a Dream Committee would like to thank the following groups, individuals and organizations for donating funds to the project. Your help is greatly appreciated and will go on to our great search fund!

- Audrey Gillette Family
- Aurora American Legion
- Wilson Photography
- Pamper Chef, Janice Warren
- Tammy's Knappe, Dawn Duerksen-Klein
- Pamper Chef, Sandra Brundage
- Branson United Methodist Church Youth Group
- St. Patrick's Social Concerns, Winthrop
- Church of Christ United, Winthrop
- Peoples Long Term Care Center Employees
- Long Creek Fish and Game Club
- Omega Catering Employees
- Lamar American Legion
- Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Fairbank
- Dunkerton High School National Honor Society
- Independence Eagles
- Signature Homesites, Sue Felber
- Eastern Iowa Food Society
- Rose of Sharon Home Society, Iowa
- Shannon's Home Society, Pennsylvania
- Peter Kirsch, Independence
- Pamper's Comedy Club, Cedar Rapids
- Patty Price
- Dave Carey, Quincy
- Kathy Ward, Thirty One
- Wagon Wheel Cakes, open to all
- Don Dean
- Jeff Miller



An aerial view of the Spece family compound.

In The Country Garden and Gifts was once considered one of the largest sources of aquatic plants in northeast Iowa and the shop carried essential pond supplies including liners, pumps, medications, chemicals and all other things necessary to maintain a water garden. After the back yard pond craze of the late 90s and early 2000s lost its drive, this became a smaller part of the business, but they still carry a variety of pond plants and a few of the necessary supplies.

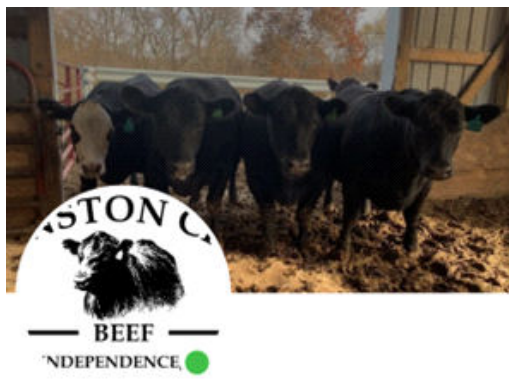
One of the greenhouses is dedicated to succulents and they offer a small collection of house plants, dwarf conifers, carnivorous plants and uncommon perennials. Located in planting hardiness zone 5a, plants must be hardy down to -20 degrees F, or they must be brought into the heated greenhouse to survive winter. Most of the potted perennials sold here are moved into a cold storage building for over wintering, including the 1000+ varieties of hostas offered! The gift shop offers garden art and garden related gifts, home decor, homespun crafts, greeting cards, and memorial gifts. They also serve as the storefront for Jacob's enterprises, which include locally raised beef for consumption (Johnston Creek Beef) and metal yard art (Country Vibe Designs).



Country Vibe Designs

968 followers • 86 following

Your local source for CNC plasma cutting. We can make custom metal art, signs, parts, and more.



Johnston Creek Beef

871 followers • 19 following

Johnston Creek Farms is a small diversified farm. We raise corn, beans, hay, cattle, and small grains.



All of the plants offered for sale are pot grown, including the water plants. Josh is very selective about sourcing his stock from trusted growers to prevent introducing pests and disease. Remarkably, 99% of the hostas offered for sale are grown by themselves from tissue cultured liners, direct from the sterile labs. Since they are never grown in the ground, there is never any digging or dividing, which lessens the chance for contamination from HVX and nematodes. Josh notes that he keeps HVX test strips on hand just in case something looks suspicious so they can immediately test it. Their pots, flats, benches and tools are sterilized before use. Soil is never re-used. Separate sets of tools are kept for the garden and for the nursery and they are never used interchangeably. Tools are sanitized after each use. They do not use chemical pesticides, preferring to use beneficial insects to do the job. They do place slug bait when necessary.

In The Country Garden and Gifts was a member of the American Hosta Growers Association until it dissolved recently. Along with Josh and Sue, it is also a member of the American Hosta Society and the Midwest Regional Hosta Society, and the American Conifer Society. They are certified and inspected annually by the State of Iowa, holding a

nursery license. They were members of the Eastern Iowa Pond Society before it dissolved during the COVID pandemic.

Depending upon the time of the year, Josh has between three and six employees helping tend the nursery. Josh spends eight to ten hours per day in the nursery. Running a successful business, especially a nursery, requires the completion of many tasks. Josh is not physically able to perform many tasks in the nursery or gardens; instead, he fills the role of manager with utmost capability. Josh is responsible for selecting the plants that will be sold in the nursery and begins by contracting the purchase of all stock. He orders the plants and supplies and writes the description of each plant before entering them into inventory on the website. When the stock arrives, he directs the staff on the placement of the plants, including where he would like each to be planted in the display gardens that he designs, and what seasonal maintenance should be performed each day. He decides which hostas should be placed into tissue culture for mass production and he secures those contracts.

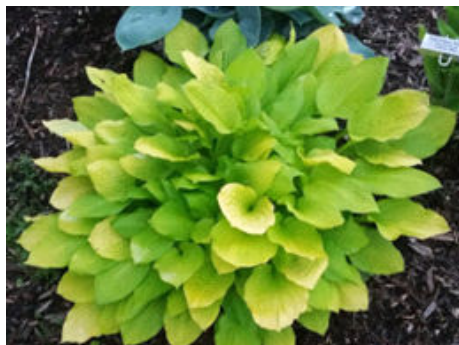
He maintains and updates the website daily, checks for orders that were placed and generates shipping schedules. He prints the invoices and shipping labels and hands the orders to his staff to gather and prepare for shipping. Next, comes his favorite task, which is networking. He checks the email and responds to queries before making any necessary phone calls. He maintains the point-of-sale data and bookkeeping, only stopping to answer the phone and customers' questions. When all daily tasks are completed, he begins the marketing of the nursery by creating ads, newsletters, planning events and posting to social media. Josh enjoys interacting with people and discussing all things horticultural. It is often during these discussions that he dreams up plans for future events or subjects for articles that should be written. Behind every successful business is an organized and capable manager, and Josh fills this role expertly.

I asked Josh if he had any plans for future additions and he noted that they put up a new section of shade house this past spring and they are reconfiguring the grow area. When completed, it will have twice the size of current area for growing out potted hosta liners. They also plan to reconfigure the retail sales area where the sun perennials are and to enlarge one of the greenhouses for more heated growing space. He noted that the nursery is a very compact area, and they are always trying to maximize the use of the space. He would also like to add a bog for *Sarracenia* and hardy bog orchids.

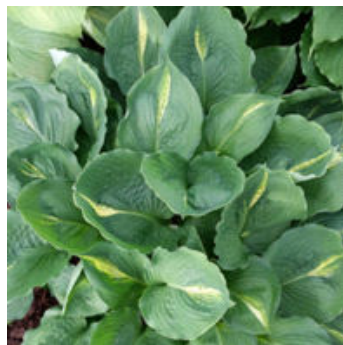
Josh does not offer hosta seeds for sale. He does a little bit of hybridizing and seed growing of his own seeds throughout the season. When a hosta seedling or sport of his is determined suitable for introduction, he has chosen the moniker "Country" for the name. Recent introductions include *Hosta* 'Country Confessions', 'Country Livewire', 'Country Sun Drop', 'Country Heartthrob' and 'Country Fine Print'. *H.* 'Country Confessions' is Josh's favorite introduction of his own because he finds it the most distinct and beautiful one. His favorite hosta that is not his own was a harder choice, with *H.* 'Liberty', 'June' and 'Guardian Angel' topping the list. But if he could only plant one variety in his garden, his choice would be *H.* 'Lakeside Paisley Print'.

Roughly ten years ago, Josh ventured into having hostas contractually tissue cultured, for their exclusive distribution. *H.* 'Country Dreaming' and 'Country Melody' are the first two

hostas introduced in this manner. Both were offered by hybridizer Don Dean as donations to the Building a Dream in the Country fundraiser, with the proceeds of the liner sales going to the fund. They have entered into similar contracts with many more hybridizers since then to introduce new varieties of hostas exclusively through the nursery.



H. 'Country Sun Drop'



H. 'Country Fine'

Right, H. 'Lakeside Paisley Print' is the hosta Josh would plant if he could only have one.



H. 'Country Livewire'



H. 'Country Heartthrob'

During the winter months when hostas are dormant, Josh spends his time marketing the business, managing online orders, placing inventory orders, bookwork and planning for spring. He admits that most of his hobbies are plant related, but he enjoys completing jigsaw puzzles! He keeps a small collection of orchids (mostly jewel orchids), African violets, Hoyas and tropical terrarium plants. He noted that the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis is his favorite public garden to visit.

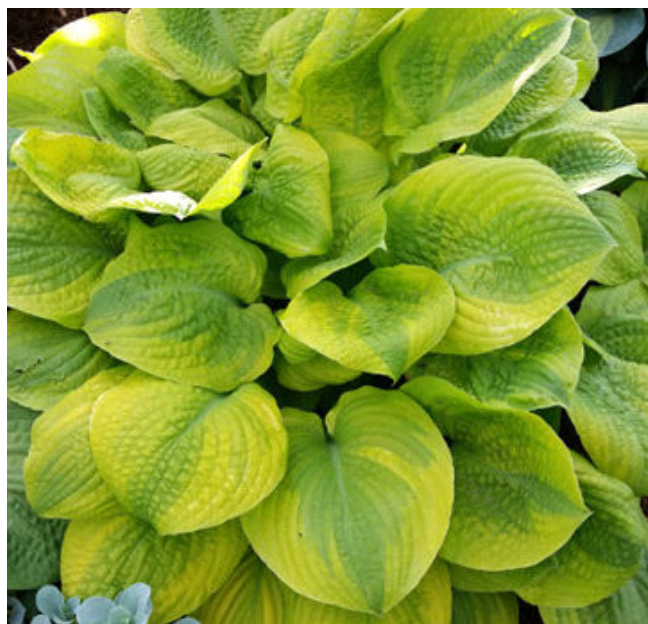
Josh serves as the Web Editor in Chief on the American Hosta Society Board. He also maintains the business website and sends out the email newsletter to all subscribers regularly that includes photos and news on what is happening “in the country.”

Josh is a talented writer, and he regularly contributes articles and photos to *The Hosta Journal*. In 2008, he was awarded the AHS Best New Author award for his contributions to the publication. He also speaks frequently on hostas, water gardening and accessible gardening, (which is a topic dear to his heart) at garden and pond clubs, Master Gardener groups and hosta societies. He served as webmaster to the Eastern Pond Society and contributed to their newsletter while it was operational.



Josh works with Chuck Andersen and Marco Fransen to bring new hosta introductions to his nursery to sell. Also pictured is Jim Heinz, who helps at the

In 2023, Josh was awarded the Alex J. Summers Distinguished Merit Award. The Alex J. Summers Distinguished Merit Award is given to a member of the American Hosta Society in recognition of their having given outstanding service to the development of the genus *Hosta*, the Society, or both. He selected *H. 'Country Confessions'* as his Distinguished Merit Hosta.



In The Country Garden and Gifts offers organized events throughout the season. Two of their most popular events are their season opener in May called “Spring In The Country Open House” and the annual “Hosta and Dessert Social.” Josh is especially proud of the success of this event. The first one was held in 2010, and they thought it was a success with 20-25 attendees. It grew in size annually to include a hosta swap, games/prizes, a biggest leaf contest and of course, desserts! In 2019, Josh asked Bob Solberg (Green Hill Hostas) to attend as a guest speaker. When he agreed, they made it an all-day event including food trucks, contests, door prizes, desserts and a presentation by Bob. Due to its success with more than 200 attendees, Bob returns each year for the event that draws attendees from across the country! It has become their largest annual event.



Look for these advertisements online for the dates in 2026 to attend these popular annual events.



Sue hosts crafting instruction throughout the year, especially welcome when the gardens are dormant. The events are well received and attended by many avid crafters. Sue also sells many of her own handcrafted creations in the store. They remain open through Christmas for shoppers to find that special gift you've been searching for!



I asked Josh if he had any advice to pass on to hosta enthusiasts. He replied, “Don’t let all the hysteria of viruses, foliar nematodes, and other pests and diseases ruin your hosta fun! These are important things to educate yourself about and take appropriate precautions against, but don’t let these things consume the fun that hostas are supposed to be. Make hosta friends! Participate in conventions, societies, and other hosta events. The people connections are the most special and rewarding part of hostas. Hostas are the friendship plant!”

I asked if he had any advice or encouragement to pass on to disabled gardeners. He replied, “As for physically challenged gardeners...don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t. Think outside the box to figure out how you can do what you want to do. Whether it’s using unconventional tools, raised beds, or growing in containers, where there’s a will, there’s a way!” Josh proves this to be wise advice, as evidenced in his success.

In The Country Garden and Gifts offers shipping to online customers through their webpage. Online shoppers can select from 300-400 hosta varieties offered online, and plants will be shipped bare root from April through September. Shipping is limited to the USA and occasionally wholesale orders to Canada, with no minimum.

Josh offers a discount clearance of hostas in September, and when they release their updated catalog for spring on November 1 annually, he offers free shipping on orders of \$125 or more, placed online between November 1 and December 31. Because this feature is published on January 1, after his promotion ends, Josh has created a special discount code for anyone reading this article who wishes to place an order online. Expiring on

January 31, 2026, the code AHS2026 will extend the free shipping offer on orders over \$125 placed online at their website in the month of January!

Here is the link to their website:

<https://www.inthecountrygardenandgifts.com/>

Their personal garden serves as their business display garden. Visitors are encouraged to meander through the gardens with over 900 varieties of hostas, rock gardens, trough gardens, ornamental grasses, dwarf conifers, unusual trees and shrubs and many uncommon sun and shade perennials. After the stroll, visitors can stroll the shade house to purchase from the 600-700 varieties offered for sale or the greenhouses to select succulents and water plants for sale. And nobody can visit without browsing the gift shop, where you will certainly find something to bring home to your own garden! Josh proclaims, "We are located in the middle of nowhere and strive to make a visit here worth the effort! Visitors can expect to find the unexpected when visiting In the Country."



In The Country is open to visitors Tuesday through Sunday, 9 am - 6 pm April through October, and Tuesday through Sunday, 10 am - 5 pm in November and December. Josh also welcomes special group tours upon appointment.

You can contact Josh directly through their website, linked above, or via email:

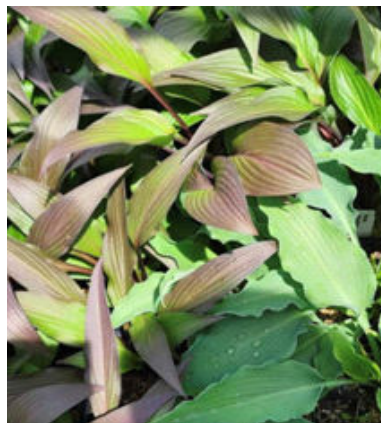
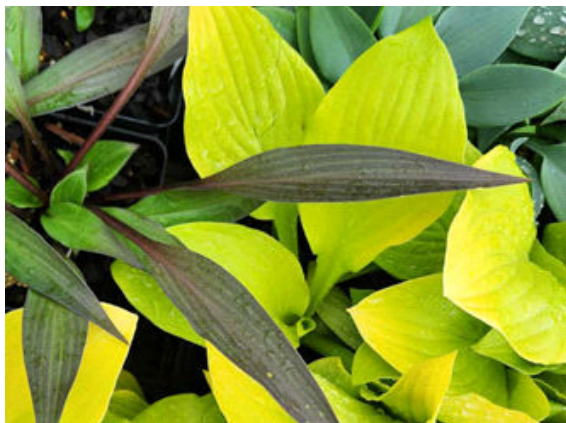
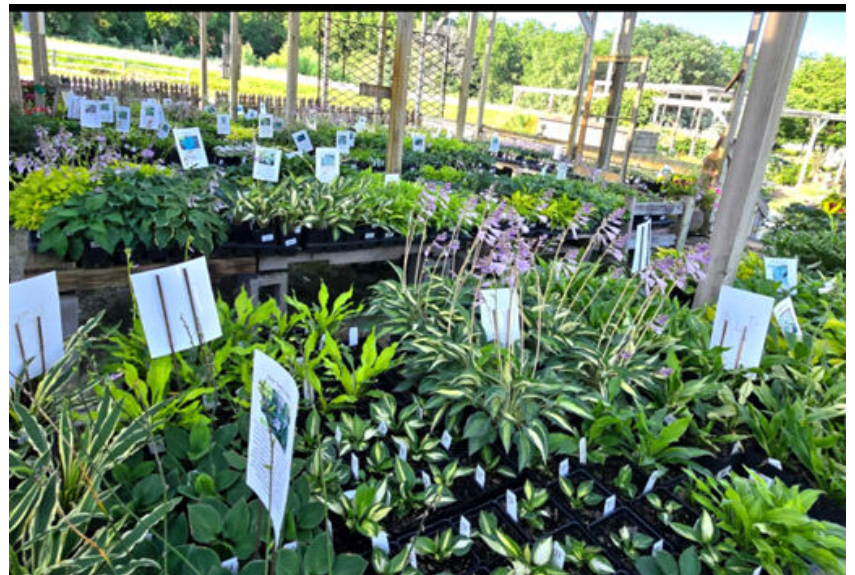
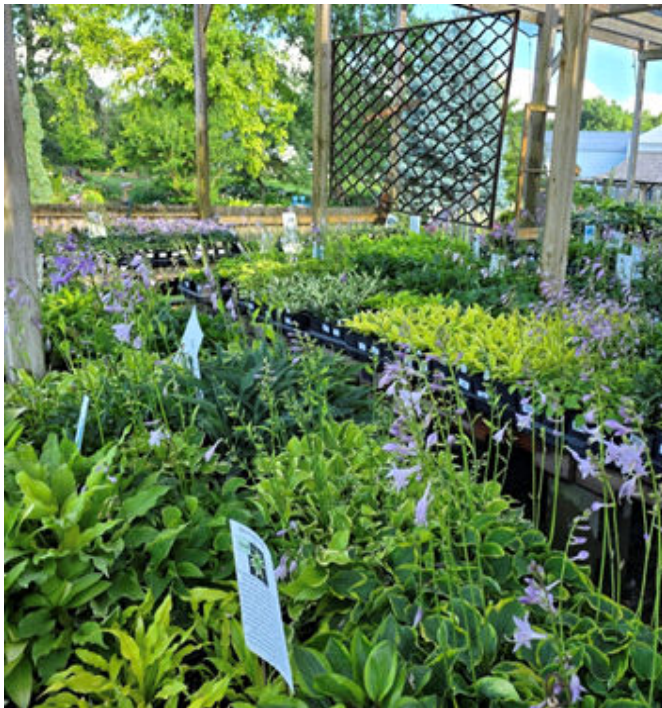
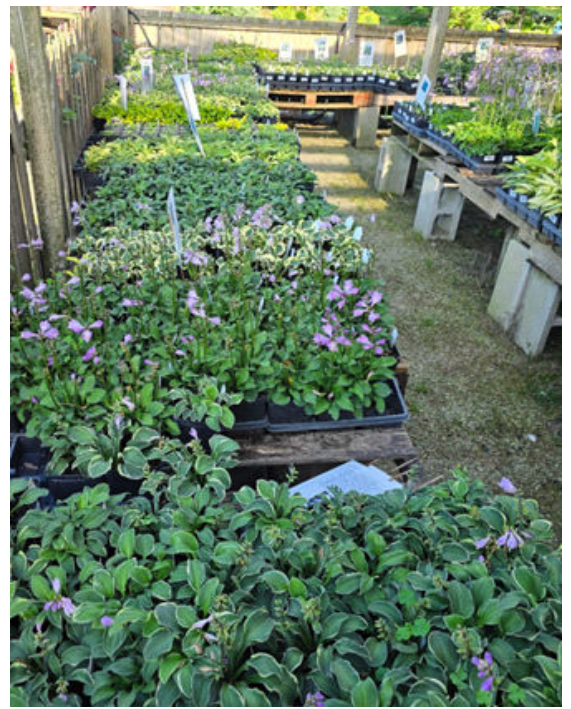
josh@inthecountrygardenandgifts.com

You can also view updated nursery information and photos on Facebook and Instagram here:

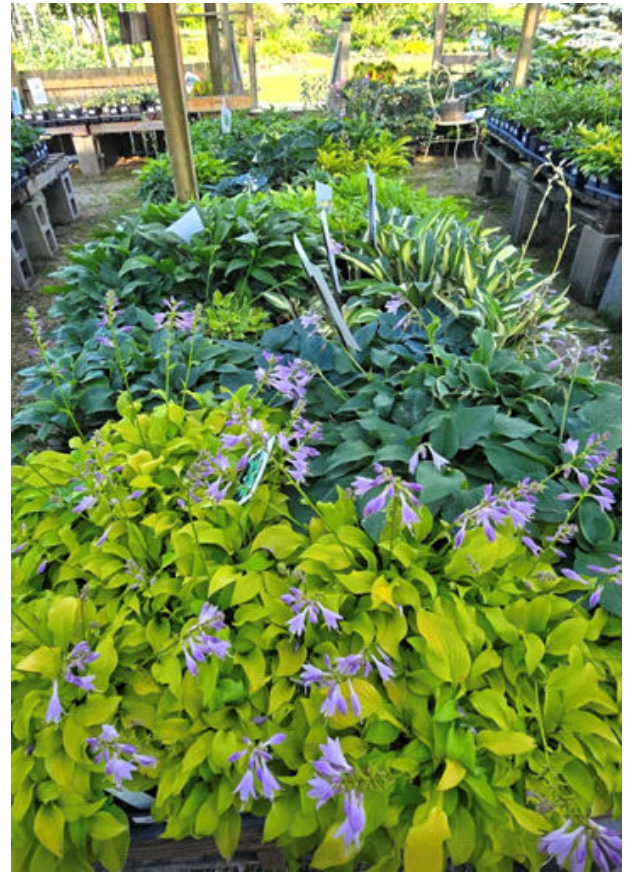
<https://www.facebook.com/inthecountry/>

<https://www.instagram.com/inthecountrygarden/>





Hosta 'Bloodline' is one of the darkest red hostas new to the marketplace for a bold contrast in your garden.

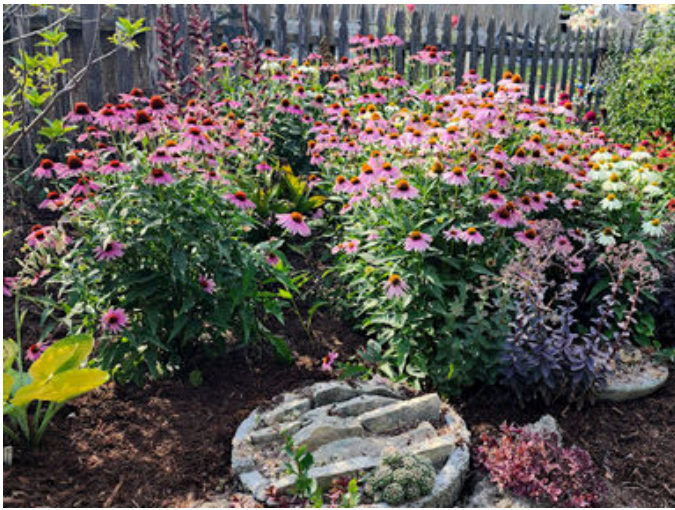


H. 'Emperor's New Clothes' is an exciting new variety offered for sale.



Above, mixing hostas with different colors, characteristics and sizes in your garden creates interest and draws the eye to the contrast.





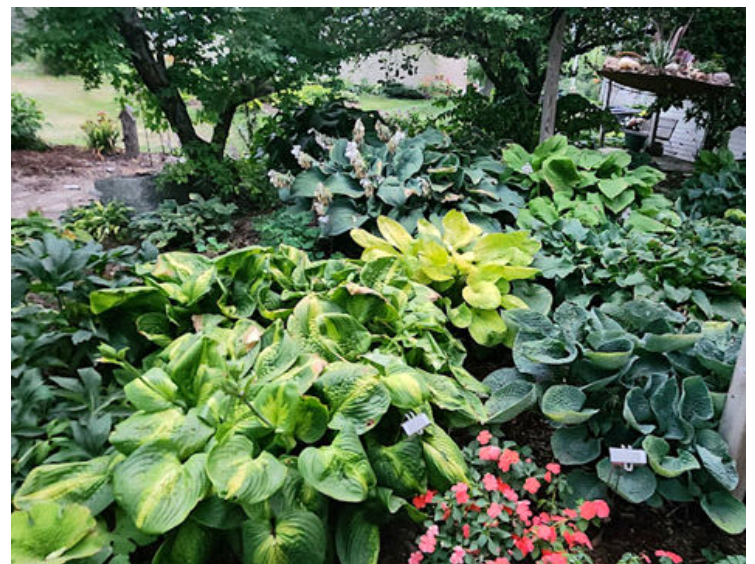
In addition to the extensive shade houses of hostas available for sale, In The Country has display gardens planted for customers to see how the hostas will look when fully mature in a garden, before deciding which new varieties to select for their own gardens.

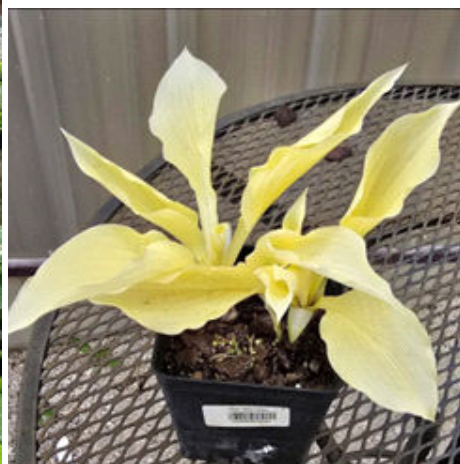






The succulent house is climate controlled so the tender growth is not exposed to temperature extremes.





***H.* 'White Feather Improved'**



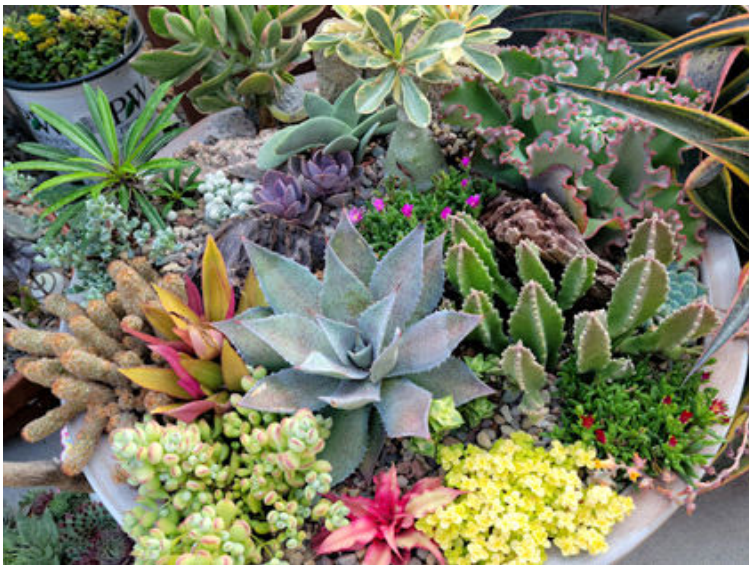
***H.* 'Light the Match'**



***H.* 'Silver Plumes'**



***H.* 'White Feather'**



In The Country Garden and Gifts might be in “Hosta Country,” but they offer many more varieties of plants than just hostas!





The wide space between tables and benches allows Josh to travel throughout as he pleases to inspect and evaluate the plants, as any general manager would.





There are hundreds of different varieties of potted hostas offered for sale for you to choose from, in every shape, color and size imaginable. Josh earned his degree in horticulture and he is able to offer expert advice on selection and care of hostas. He enjoys interacting with his customers and could speak “hosta” all day long. He is equally passionate about his succulent collection, and hosta companion plants.



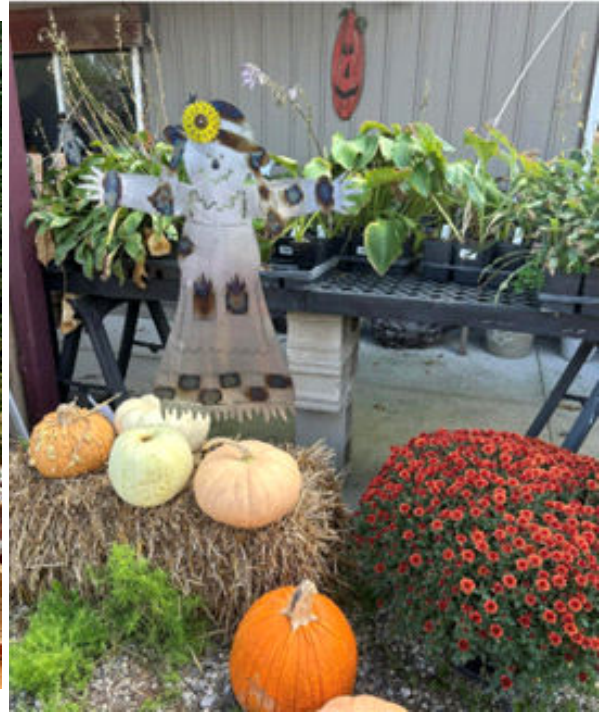


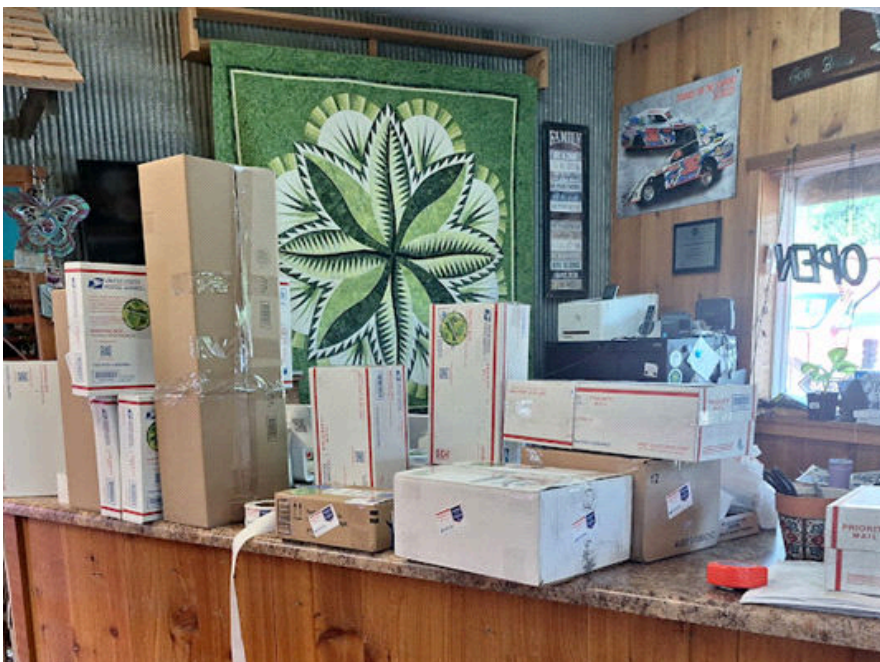
There is shade cloth installed over each section of the sales area to mimic the natural garden shade from trees and shrubs that hostas thrive in, which is absent in the nursery. Gardeners can create shade for their hostas in this same manner if necessary, when trees are lost by natural means.





The metal garden art created by Jacob and his business, Country Vibe Designs, blends into the landscape and provides whimsy, interest and color to a dull garden. It allows gardeners to inject their own personality into their gardens through their choices of art and decoration placement.





Josh is the plant manager and Sue is the craft and gift manager. Many of her handmade crafts and planters are offered for sale, and the store is a fabulous shopping site, always decorated for the season, especially at Christmas!

Left, shipping is a daily event here, and many packages are sent and received each day. These boxes are packed with bare root plants ready to be planted in your garden when you receive them on your doorstep.



In The Country Garden and Gifts is truly a family enterprise, with four separate businesses represented under one storefront roof. In addition to plants by Josh and crafts/gifts by Sue, Jacob displays the wares of his two businesses here too. Country Vibe Designs' metal garden art and Johnston Creek Beef's pre-packaged meat are sold in the store. A sample of his products are pictured here.

Country Vibe Designs Facebook link:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/17GLbetRid/?mibextid=wwXIfr>



Johnston Creek Beef website:

<https://www.johnstoncreekfarms.com/>



1/4 BEEF BUNDLE

\$1199

Bundle Includes:

- 4 T-Bones
- 4 Ribeyes
- 6 Sirloin Steaks
- 2 Round Steaks
- 4 Minute Steaks
- 1 Sirloin Tip Roast
- 1 Rump Roast
- 1 Round Roast
- 3 Chuck Roasts
- 2 Chuck Arm Roasts
- 1 Brisket
- 60 lbs. Ground Beef

JOHNSTON CREEK BEEF

(916) 327-9938
johnstoncreekfarms.com



When a hosta related event is nearby, In The Country Garden and Gifts can usually be found vending. Josh selects the plants that will be sold and prepares the matching signs for the display, as shown above. Below, plants are packed in trays on carts ready for transportation to the event. They may also include some artistic pieces from the shop that are relevant to the event. It's the next best thing to being there in person!





This interview was conducted and compiled by Gail J Russo, of Cedarville, NJ.

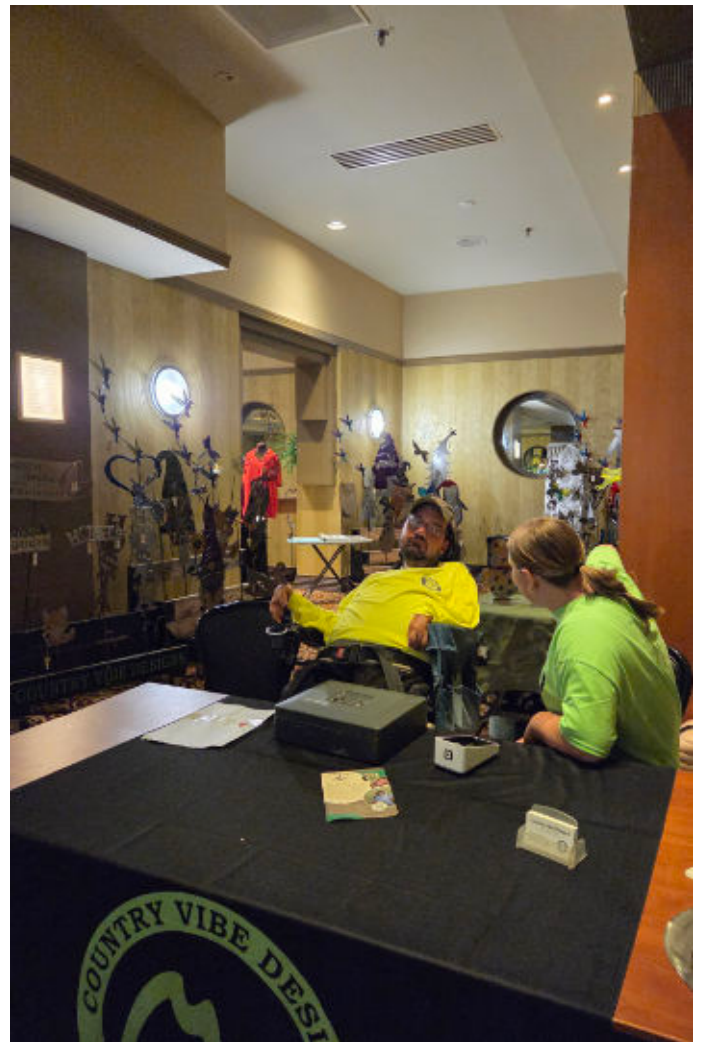
The objective of this column is to allow the hosta gardeners of the world to learn about the existence of your business so they might plan to visit your business or place an order online, if available. All the photos printed were supplied by the business featured unless otherwise noted.

If you would like to see your hosta business featured in this column, free of charge, please contact Gail Russo at Russo4@comcast.net for the application questionnaire.

International vendors are welcome to be featured, but only if they ship to the USA. If you do not ship but have lovely display gardens, consider applying to be featured in the “Welcome to my Garden” column of this newsletter instead. You must communicate in English.



Josh vending at the 2025 convention ‘Double Feature in Peoria, IL.
Photo by Mary Vertz



Jacob vending at the 2025 convention ‘Double Feature in Peoria, IL.
Photo by Mary Vertz



And In Other Hosta News . . .

Buckeye Hosta Fever: Back to the Classics!

By Betsy Peterson

Get ready! Buckeye Hosta Fever is just around the corner, promising a return to the roots of what makes hosta gardening so special. This summer's convention is all about keeping it simple and celebrating the sheer joy of hosta gardening in the backyard. A dedicated group of four co-chairs—Sheila Sands, and Laurie Lowe, Doug Beilstein, and Dick Barbee have been working tirelessly behind the scenes to make this convention happen.

I had the pleasure of speaking with convention co-chair Doug Beilstein to get an inside look at what it takes to organize an event of this magnitude. Planning a premier gathering like the Buckeye Hosta Fever convention is a year-round effort for the dedicated team. Doug isn't a rookie convention planner however, he was instrumental in organizing the 2005 AHS convention, 'Hosta Heartland' held in Cleveland, Ohio.

Doug shared that the organizers wanted to highlight the joy and beauty of hosta gardening in the average person's backyard; a return to a classic hosta convention of years past. The message, Doug hinted, is that you can accomplish an incredible amount — a lot — even on a regular city lot.

The beautiful Embassy Suites in Dublin, OH will host convention-goers Thursday, Friday, and Saturday June 11-13. At just \$149 per night, the room rate is a great deal, especially since it includes a fantastic cook-to-order breakfast! Your registration fee also includes transportation for Thursday's garden tours and a BBQ dinner at the home of Dick and Jeanne Barbee, a true highlight of the weekend!



Jeanne and Dick Barbee (Used with permission)

Over three days, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, attendees will tour 13 gardens that showcase the beauty and creativity possible in gardens of every size. Many of these are smaller, more personal gardens; authentic “mom-and-pop” spaces that reflect what’s possible with thoughtful design and a good eye, even on a modest lot.



Jane & Clarence Hanna
(Photos Used with Permission)



Mardy and Doug Beilstein (Photo used with permission)

Friday's tour features five gardens. For an additional fee, you can purchase a pass that includes bus transportation and a boxed lunch for both Friday and Saturday. Bus seating is limited to 150 registrants. All other participants can take a self-guided tour using provided QR codes.

Saturday's tours include four standout gardens: Clarence Hanna's Kirkside Hosta, Doug Beilstein's hybridizer garden at Millcreek Gardens, John and Whaja Troutman's Garden, and Seeley's Nursery.

In addition to the tours, the convention will offer:

Top-notch speakers, including avant-garde gardeners Liz and Jared Hughes of Groovy Plants Ranch (keynote speakers), a dose of humor from Don Rawson, a lively panel discussion, plus, a leaf show, auction, raffle, awards, seedling show, and vendors galore!

The Exclusive Convention Hostas

No hosta convention is complete without special hostas! This year, you get to choose between two exclusive convention hostas to take home:

Hosta Name	Creator	Description	Key Features
<i>Hosta</i> ‘I Dream of Jeanne’	Dick Barbee	A seedling of <i>H.</i> ‘Sagae’, named after his wife, Jeanne.	Forms a large mound (24" tall x 47" wide). Lime green, deeply veined leaves turn a rich golden hue over the summer. Fertile, white flowers.
<i>H.</i> ‘Buckeye Candy’	Clarence Hanna	A cross made in 2017: <i>H.</i> ‘Candy Dish’ x (<i>H.</i> ‘Brutus’ x <i>H. macrophyllia</i>)	A mature clump is a sizable presence (25" high x 38" wide). Dark green leaves with the signature rippled edge of <i>H.</i> ‘Candy Dish’ on a larger scale. 34" purple scapes.



H. ‘I Dream of Jeanne’ (Convention photo)



H. ‘Buckeye Candy’ (Convention Photo)

From inspiring gardens to great company—and two stunning new hostas—the 2026 AHS Convention in Dublin, Ohio promises to be an unforgettable experience.

Don’t miss your chance to catch a case of Buckeye Hosta Fever!

Visit hostaconvention.org

2026 AHS Convention

Hosted by the Central Ohio Hosta Society

Buckeye Hosta Fever



**Join us in the Heart of Ohio for Buckeye Hosta Fever
in Dublin OH (a suburb of Columbus).**

Registration for the convention is limited to 350 participants. Register early to reserve your place! Download registration form at AmericanHostaSociety.org

All the events will be there: Hosta Show, educational presentations, live auction, garden tours, convention plant, vendors, and evening hosta-tality.

Registration information available soon on the AHS Convention Website (HostaConvention.org).

Buckeye Hosta Fever

2026 AHS NATIONAL CONVENTION



June 10-13, 2026 – Dublin, Ohio
Embassy Suites by Hilton, 5100 Upper Metro Place, Dublin, OH 43017

HOSTED BY THE CENTRAL OHIO HOSTA SOCIETY (COHS)

Make hotel reservations by using the link at the AHS convention website:

www.Hostaconvention.org beginning June 30, 2025

REGISTRATION DETAILS (Please print clearly – ONE attendee per form)

Name:	Preferred Name on Badge:
Address:	City, State, Zip Code:
Phone:	Email:

STANDARD REGISTRATION if received by 5/15/26 (Thurs. BBQ dinner included)	\$235	
LATE REGISTRATION if received after 5/15/26 (Thurs. BBQ dinner included)	\$260	
Friday & Saturday Banquet COMPANION MEAL ONLY or Vendors Meals (Registration includes your Banquet meals. This is only if you are bringing a guest with you)	\$105	\$
GARDEN TOUR BUS Includes bus fee and box lunches for Friday & Saturday **Bus seats limited to 160 attendees** Box lunches for Tour Bus Riders ONLY – Lunch on your own for self-drive Friday – Choose One ☐ Deli Ham ☐ Deli Turkey ☐ Vegan Wrap Saturday – Choose One ☐ Deli Roast Beef ☐ Deli Turkey ☐ Vegan Wrap	\$110	\$
2026 Convention T-Shirt - Unisex Sizes ☐ S ☐ M ☐ L ☐ XL ☐ 2XL	\$20	\$
CANCELLATION POLICY: <i>Registrar must receive written request by: April 2, 2026 (100% refund); received by May 1, 2026 (50% refund); NO refund after May 1, 2026.</i>		
	Total Due →	\$

Friday Banquet Meal Choice: ☐ Grilled Bone-in Pork Chop ☐ Beef Tips with Gorgonzola ☐ Ratatouille (vegan)	Saturday Banquet Meal Choice ☐ Grilled Salmon ☐ Chicken Marsala ☐ Eggplant Parmesan (vegetarian)
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Check Payable to:
Buckeye Hosta Fever
MAIL PAYMENT AND FORM TO:

Debi Gerrick, Registrar
1638 Doone Road,
Upper Arlington, OH 43221

List any special dietary restrictions/allergies:

Hosta Show: Please check if you wish to

☐ Judge ☐ Clerk

Plan # _____ entries in Hosta Leaf Show (Limit 20)

Ed Elslager Seedling Competition:

Plan # _____ entries in Seedling Competition (Limit 10)

\$5 per seedling entry fee paid at convention

Rules & Regulations available at

Hostaconvention.org

Friday night auction

I plan to donate _____ items for the auction

I am willing to volunteer during the convention

___ YES ___ NO

Hosta Judges Clinics: I will attend _____ Clinic I _____ Clinic II _____ Clinic III | Need Judges Handbook _____
(\$15 payable at Clinic)

Registration is limited to 350 participants. Questions? – contact Debi Gerrick at:

debigerick@gmail.com or (614) 205-8187



And In Regional News . . .

Hosta College

- An awesome two-day educational event in Piqua, OH, hosted by the Great Lakes Region.
- Very affordable registration fee, with one low price for everyone.
- A lively plant auction on Friday evening.
- On Saturday, five informative class sessions by excellent teachers.
- A well-stocked vending area with live plants and gardening items.
- A raffle with many items to interest potential winners.
- Snacks and fellowship with good hosta friends.
- A complimentary continental breakfast as well as lunch, included in the registration fee.
- A banquet and presentation on Saturday evening.
- A ton of fun!

Great Lakes Region Hosta College
Upper Valley Career Center
8811 Career Drive
Piqua, OH 45356
March 20 & 21, 2026

<https://hostacollege.org/>

2026 Class list will be posted on January 1, 2026

2026 Gift Plants - Your Choice of One



H. Dancing in the Moonlight



H. Seasons in the Sun

Dixie Regional Hosta Convention



SAVE THE DATE

Hosted by the Hosta Society of North Alabama

May 29 - May 30, 2026
Huntsville, Alabama

Register at <https://alabamahostas.weebly.com>

Email: alabamahostas@gmail.com

Join us for a Golden Celebration in Madison, WI.
We are celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the
Midwest Regional Hosta Society.



July 9-10-11 2026
Sheraton Madison Hotel



The 2026 convention plant, grown by Don Dean, has been named Golden Celebration. It's a small/medium bright yellow hosta. The perfect name for a perfect celebration.

2026 MRHS 50th Anniversary Celebration Convention REGISTRATION FORM

July 9-11, 2026 – Madison, Wisconsin

Madison Marriott South Hotel, 706 John Nolen Drive, Madison, WI 53713

Make your hotel reservations by calling (608) 251-2300 or use the link at the

MRHS convention website: midwesthostasociety.org

Remember to request the special 2026 MRHS Room Rate.

(Room Rate is \$129 per night – plus \$18 per person for breakfast)



REGISTRATION DETAILS *(Please print clearly - one attendee per form)*

Name:	Preferred Name on Badge:
Address:	City, State, Zip Code:
Phone:	Email:

*Please see cancellation policy at midwesthostasociety.org

EARLY REGISTRATION if received by 3/15/26

\$ 189

STANDARD REGISTRATION if received by 6/15/26

\$ 199

LATE REGISTRATION received after 6/15/26

\$ 219

MEALS ONLY (companion or vendors)

\$ 141

\$

\$

Optional Thursday night welcome event – Olbrich Botanical Gardens with private use of Bolz Conservatory	\$ 30			
<table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"> Friday Banquet Meal Choice: ☐ Caribbean Mahi Mahi ☐ Steak au Poivre ☐ Vegetarian </td> <td style="width: 50%;"> Saturday Banquet Meal Choice: ☐ Rosemary Chicken ☐ Grilled Pork Tenderloin ☐ Vegetarian </td> </tr> </table>	Friday Banquet Meal Choice: ☐ Caribbean Mahi Mahi ☐ Steak au Poivre ☐ Vegetarian	Saturday Banquet Meal Choice: ☐ Rosemary Chicken ☐ Grilled Pork Tenderloin ☐ Vegetarian	TOTAL DUE	\$
Friday Banquet Meal Choice: ☐ Caribbean Mahi Mahi ☐ Steak au Poivre ☐ Vegetarian	Saturday Banquet Meal Choice: ☐ Rosemary Chicken ☐ Grilled Pork Tenderloin ☐ Vegetarian			

Please list any dietary restrictions or food allergies. _____

Make Check Payable to: **Wisconsin Hosta Society**

MAIL THIS FORM AND PAYMENT TO: **Dave Collura, 13600 W. Graham St., New Berlin, WI 53151-2572**

Hosta Show: Please check if you wish to ☐ Judge ☐ Clerk Plan # _____ entries in the Hosta Leaf Show Seedling Competition: Plan # _____ entries in Seedling Competition Rules & Regulations available at MIDWESTHOSTASOCIETY.ORG	Friday night auction I plan to donate _____ items for the auction. Saturday Gardens tour ride sharing transportation: I can provide transport for _____ persons. I will need transport for _____ persons.
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Videos now available on the AHS Website

Brendan Shick, AHS Video Producer

This quarter we have launched a video section on the AHS website. At present, three presentations and two garden tours are available to view in total. Garden tours were featured at American Hosta Society conventions and include interviews with the gardeners themselves. We look forward to producing similar content during the next AHS National Convention (Peoria, IL) in June 2025 and including this on the AHS website in the months to follow.

Non-members may **preview** some of the content available to members at <https://americanhostasociety.org/videos> and enjoy a full-length sample presentation on Hosta Virus X. Meanwhile, members of the American Hosta Society have exclusive access (password protected) to the extended garden tour videos and presentations at <https://americanhostasociety.org/members/resources/videos>.

Grab a beverage, sit back and relax, and watch these videos as you glean design ideas, jot down your favorite hostas, ooh and ahh over impressive landscapes, and maybe learn a thing or two. We hope these pieces will also serve as a resource for local Hosta Clubs to use at their gatherings.

Editor's Note: You can also go to <https://americanhostasociety.org/> to explore all that is available on the website including the Videos and Members Only area.



BECOME A MEMBER!



- Receive *The Hosta Journal*, mailed to you
- Gain access to members-only online materials
- Participate in exciting events and auctions
- Further your love of hostas and gardening

HOSTA.org

Enjoy the carefree beauty of this shade-tolerant perennial

Sign Up!
New members join for \$40/yr and receive a free hosta, *The Hosta Journal* and a \$15 voucher towards hosta purchases from participating vendors

or call to join 309-678-4119

HOSTA.ORG

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN HOSTA SOCIETY

- Receive two print issues per year of our popular publication, *The Hosta Journal*. This 84-page publication is filled with color photos and current information regarding Hostas.
- Receive a copy of *The Hosta Adventure – A Growers Guide* and the *Hosta of the Year* booklet, both filled with color photographs and a wealth of information.
- Receive access to the members-only section of the website to read our *Online Hosta Journal* and access other publications and our member directory.
- Attend national and regional meetings where specialty vendors offer the most recently introduced *Hostas* and companion plants and where a live auction offers rare and distinctive *Hostas* and other garden items.
- Enjoy garden tours open only to AHS members.
- Exhibit your favorite *Hostas* and compete for recognition in various AHS national and regional cut-leaf shows.
- Vote on the most popular *Hostas* with our popularity poll.
- Enjoy the camaraderie of fellow *Hosta* enthusiasts.

For more information or to join go to hosta.org or call 309-678-4119.



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eMembership in the American Hosta Society will unlock the following benefits:

- Full-color issue of *The Hosta Journal* available to read online twice each year
- Unique digital edition of *The Hosta Journal* emailed once each year
- Access to “Members Only” section of the website
- Eligibility to purchase a member-only hosta every year
- Exclusive invitation to exhibit hostas and compete for recognition in AHS-sanctioned Hosta Shows
- Updates on speaker programs, events, awards, plant auctions, news, and more!

FIRST-TIME MEMBERS ALSO RECEIVE

- \$15 voucher for use at participating nurseries
- *Hosta Adventure—A Grower’s Guide*, a primer on hostas outlining what every gardener should know
- *Hosta of the Year Booklet*, a full-color publication featuring the American Hosta Growers Association Hostas of the year

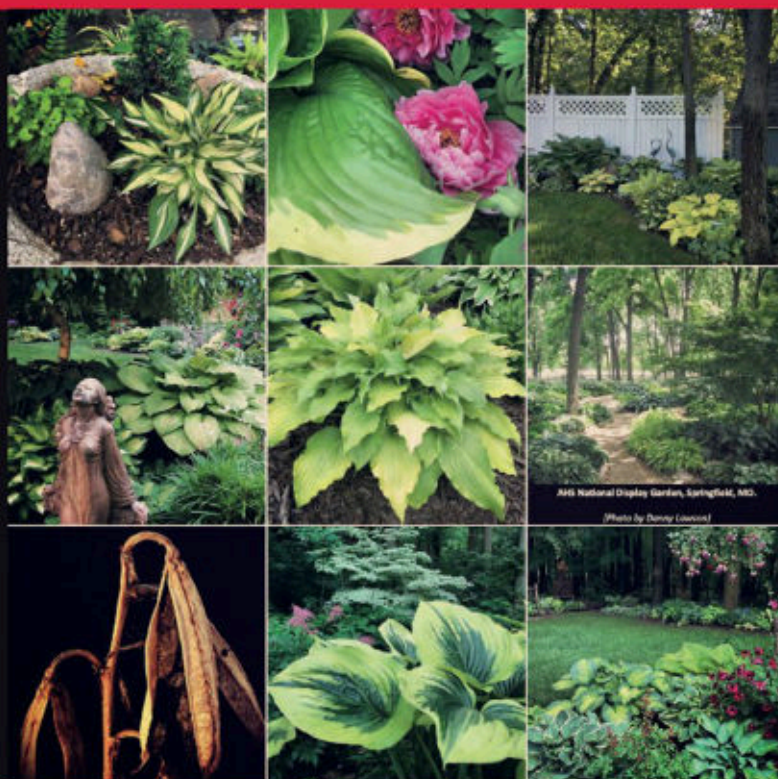
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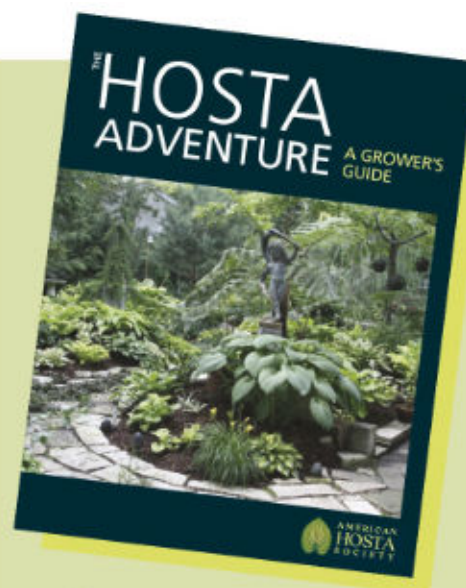
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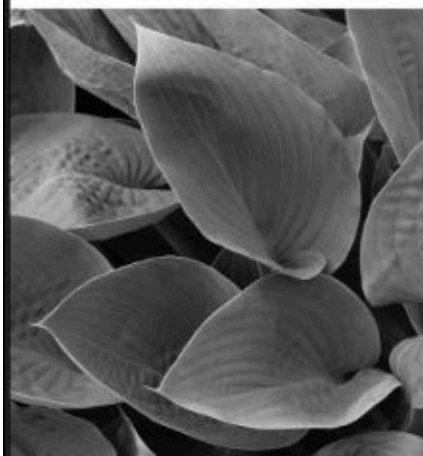
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