

MICHIGAN HOSTA HAPPENINGS



Newsletter of the Michigan Hosta Society

2019

Save the Date!

March 15-16

GLRHS Hosta College
Pique, OH

NEW DATE

May 18

MHS Workday & Board Mtg.
Hidden Lake Gardens
Tipton, MI

June 12-15

AHS National Convention
Green Bay, WI

June 21-23

GLRHS Tailgate Weekend
Cleveland, OH

June 22

MHS Leaf Show & Plant Sale
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI

August 18

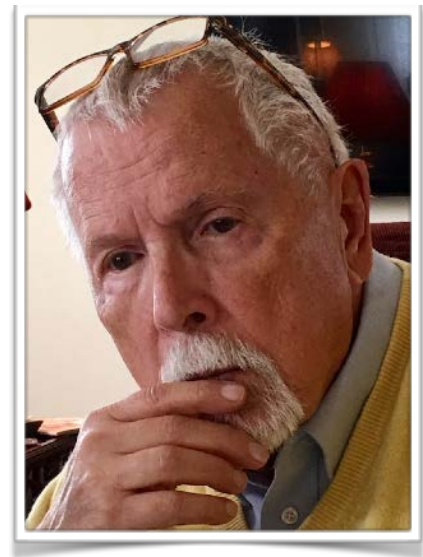
Workday and Annual Meeting
Hidden Lake Gardens
Tipton, MI

Letter from the President

Dear MHS Members,

To borrow from Shakespeare, “now is the winter of our discontent.”

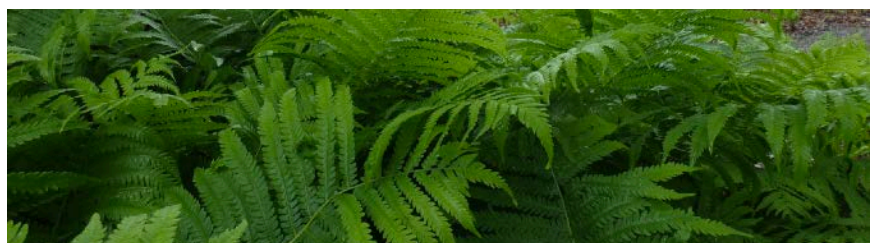
It is January and we’ve had just a trace of snow in Saginaw. As a hosta gardener, snow is an important commodity. It provides a much needed insulation for my plants against the harsh winter temperatures that we get in the Saginaw valley.



Grey Gitzen, MHS President

One of the functions of the Michigan Hosta Society president is setting the dates for our various activities. When I set the date for our 2019 spring workday and meeting at Hidden Lake Gardens, I didn’t realize I scheduled it on the Memorial Day weekend. So, please be advised that I have changed the date from Saturday, May 25 to Saturday, May 18.

Speaking of the Hidden Lake Gardens, we are still seeking



Hosta trivia

Q: How many registered offspring did Herb Benedict's 'Betty' sire as either a pollen parent, or a pod parent?

A: Zero, it is sterile. Most of the rippled margin plants came from 'Holly's Honey'.



Q: For whom was 'Betty' named?

A: After 47 of years of marriage, Herb Benedict named 'Betty' after his first girlfriend. It was not his wife's, Dorothy's, middle name.



Q: How many registered hostas are there right now?

A: 5,179



Q: Who (2) started the American Hosta Society?

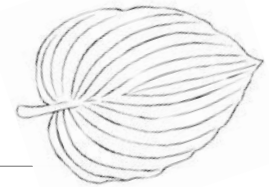
A: Alex J. Summers Long Island, NY and Eunice Fisher Oshkosh, WI April 16, 1968 with 4 members and \$3.00 membership had \$22 and they used this money for letterheads and invitations

Courtesy of joanscountrygarden.com

Herb Benedict plants. It would be great if we could have the Herb and Dorothy Benedict hybridizer bed finished by the time the national convention visits Michigan in 2021. If you have known and labeled Benedict hybrids that you would like to donate to the garden, but are unable to get them to the Hillside, let me know and I will make sure they are collected.

In closing, Kudos to Ed Steinbrecher and Don Rawson for Co-Chairing the AHS National Convention in Kalamazoo. We look forward to another opportunity to show what great gardens we have in Michigan!

Sincerely,
Grey Gitzen
MHS President



2019 Hosta College News

Hosta College course listings have been posted on the web site www.ihostohio.org/glhc for March 15th and 16th.

Browse by period (1-6) or review the complete list of classes. You must select a lunch period (either 3rd or 4th period).

Click on Home to get an idea of the registration and payment process if this will be your first time to register. Also, be sure you log in with the Hosta College Site Registration ahead of time, so you know your user name and password. This information is needed when you go to register for the classes you want to take.

Registration opens:

- For MHS members (\$42): 6 AM, Jan. 26th - Feb. 15th
- For non-members (\$55): 6 AM, Feb. 2nd - Feb. 15th

Most classes will fill up very quickly, so your best bet to get what you want is to have your desired schedule in front of you (1st and 2nd choice for each period) when you log in January 26th.

New this year: Hosta College for Kids!

If your child or grandchild is 10-15 years old as of Jan. 1, 2019 you can register him/her for age appropriate classes.

Directions for registration will be on the web site. Lunch for your child will be included in the registration fee. The hours for class will be the same as the adult classes.

Youth are also welcome to register to attend the banquet with you. Fee schedules are on the web site. The American Hosta Society has committed financial support to help defray the cost of youth registrations!



Look at the fabulous line up of classes:

Friday evening topics - Bald Eagles and Painting Rock Garden Rocks

Saturday AM and PM topics - Intro to Hosta

Gardening, Growing Hosta Seeds, Monarch Butterflies (including building a butterfly feeding station), Bee Studies, Bats and the building of a bat house, and Blue Birds, with the building of a blue birdhouse.

Help make our *Hosta College for Kids* a successful one by registering your child after you finish your own registration!



Ask the Expert!

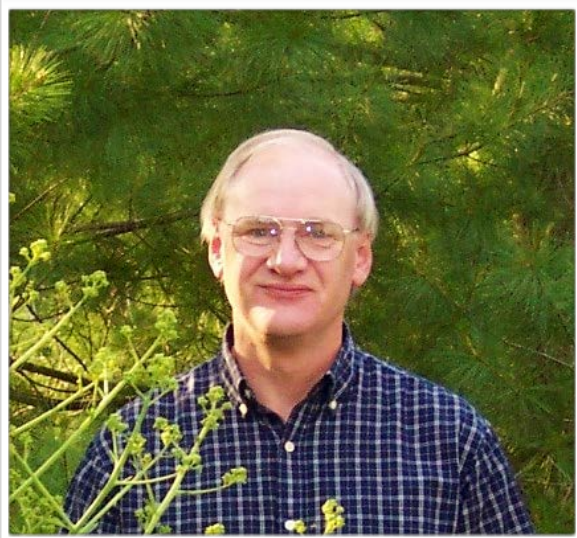
Charlie D. from Grand Rapids asks, *“I have heard a lot about Hosta Virus X, but I still don’t know a lot about it. Can you tell me what it is, why I should be concerned, and what I can do about it?”*

In the last issue of Hosta Happenings we launched a new idea to answer gardening questions you may have. In this issue we “Ask the Expert” to answer a question that has recently become a problem in the hosta garden, namely the issue of Hosta Virus X (HVX). This virus caught the hosta world by surprise not long ago. It scared the garden community because its potential impact on the hosta garden could become devastating if left unchecked. But we have since learned that the problem can be dealt with, but we must first know what Virus X is before we can formulate a plan to control it in our garden. In this first of 5 parts, we will learn what Hosta Virus X is and why we should be concerned about it. In our next newsletter, we will find out what the symptoms of Virus X are and which hostas are most commonly

infected. In July, our newsletter will focus on how we can test for the virus and what we should do if we find that we have an infected hosta. Then, in October, we will examine how the virus is spread; what we can do to prevent it; and, how we should clean and disinfect our garden tools. Finally, in January of next year, we will explore some myths and facts about HVX and what resources are available to learn more about the virus.



Our “Ask The Expert” is Don Rawson from Comstock Park, Michigan. Don and his wife Pam live on four country acres near Grand Rapids, MI. Since childhood, Don has always enjoyed gardening. Together, they grow



several hundred hosta cultivars, tall bearded irises, lilies and daylilies, and an assortment of other companion plants. Don does some hybridizing on the side, growing several thousand hosta seedlings each year. His best-known hosta is ‘Rhino Hide’, which has the distinction of being the thickest-leaved

cultivar available. Hosta ‘Gabriel’s Wing’, a sport of ‘Empress Wu’, with a creamy white, wavy margin, is his latest introduction.

As a founding member and the president of the West Michigan Hosta Society, Don speaks occasionally to local gardening clubs. In addition, he is active in the American Hosta Society, of which he has been a member for over 20 years. He serves as co-chairman of the Nomenclature Committee and compiles the list of miniature hostas for the AHS website.

Don is also responsible for two publications: The Hosta Lists and the Hosta Hybridizer’s Manual. The Hosta Lists booklet is a compilation of 102 individual lists of hosta species and cultivars based upon various characteristics. Many lists for hosta theme gardens have also been compiled. The booklet represents two decades of work on his part and currently includes over 29,000 entries.

The second booklet — the Hosta Hybridizer’s Manual — is a collection of articles from various authors and well-known hosta hybridizers. This publication is probably the most practical and helpful resource offered to the beginning hybridizer, covering all aspects of germinating and growing your own hosta seedlings.

We thank Don for all of his contributions to the Michigan Hosta Society and to the Hosta Happenings Newsletter!



What is Hosta Virus X (HVX)?

Hosta Virus X is one of several viruses known to infect plants, and specifically hostas. Discovered in the 1990s and studied by Dr. Ben Lockhart at the University of Minnesota, HVX causes irregular mottling and distortion of the foliage. Symptoms may take several years to become apparent once a



plant is infected. During this time, a diseased plant can infect others in the nursery or garden. In cases where it is not obvious, only careful scientific testing can determine if a hosta is infected with HVX; there is no way for the gardener or nursery owner to tell it.

Why should I be concerned about Hosta Virus X?

Large numbers of HVX infected plants are currently prevalent and sold at all levels of the nursery industry around the world. Its primary danger lies in its ability to spread prolifically. No hosta is immune. While this disease does not kill a plant, infected subjects may exhibit poor vigor, besides the mottling, inkbleed and weird distortion of the foliage.

If a hosta is already infected with a virus such as HVX before going into tissue culture, the virus will be propagated along with the plant. Many infected hostas currently on the market were tissue-cultured in Europe and other locations. Plants that were clean after the tissue culture process may also be infected, as well as plants which are propagated by division and then field grown. The virus can be passed on to hundreds and thousands of other plants quickly and easily without even knowing it.



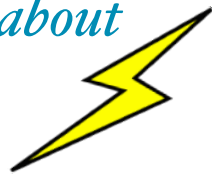
Simply removing an infected leaf or cutting out the portion of the hosta which shows symptoms of Hosta Virus X will not help cure the plant. The virus has spread throughout the plant by the time any symptoms become apparent. There is no cure for plants infected with HVX and it won't eventually go away on its own. Even if you don't see the symptoms in the following season, the virus is still present in the plant and still able to infect other plants. Any hosta which is infected should be carefully removed from the garden and discarded (not thrown on the compost pile!).



In this continuing column, we will look at Hosta Virus X in detail so you can be on the lookout for it in nurseries and gardens. We will also discuss how you can test for it if you have a plant you suspect may be infected, and some safe practices you should follow in order to help prevent it from spreading in your own garden. After all, if you're like me, your goal is to have large, luscious hosta specimens that are vigorous, healthy and disease-free!

Everything (almost) you wanted to know about electric fences

By Michael Greanya



Electric fences consist of the following:

- A low impedance fence charger: The power source for generating the fence. They are typically advertised in the number of miles they can carry the charge, but the range often corresponds to the number of volts they put out and that number can seemingly be staggering and make you wary about safety. Keep in mind that while they may have something like a 10,000-volt output, the amps associated with the volt output are very low. Because of this, coming in contact with the fence will not cause harm to you... but it will wake you up. The longer the mile range of the charger, the more easily it will continue to conduct energy through grass, twigs, small branches and other debris that may come in contact with the fence over time and this type of material can cause the fence to short out and stop functioning if the fence wire come in contact with it a lot. Also, the more powerful the charger, the more easily it will produce a shock on animals with thicker hair even with a minimal amount of debris in contact with the wire.
- Galvanized Ground Rod(s): Generally, the number one reason for the failure of an electric fence to operate (besides a short in the system or a wire being down) is the ground. A good, long ground rod (I prefer 6 feet but some people use 8') needs to be placed within a reasonably short distance of the charger and a good heavy insulated wire attached from the ground rod (via ground clamp) to the charger box. Two or three rods may be necessary depending on your soil type and moisture content.
- Plastic Insulators: There are different types of insulators. I use the yellow plastic insulators (can be spray painted with a paint that will adhere to plastic) that fit on a T-Bar (can also be spray painted to be less obtrusive) post or those that can be nailed into a tree. (If convenient, trees are more aesthetic than T-bars). I also use nail-in insulators on one side of our property where there is a line of trees.
- Galvanized Wire: Although I started out using a 14-gauge galvanized wire (a heavier wire), I now use 17-gauge. The reason is because the 17-gauge breaks easier when a

deer runs through it without breaking the insulators. The other reason is that 14 gauge really isn't necessary, is much more visible and some people think it deters from their garden, and is harder to bend.

- T-Post or one of the other alternatives for fencing posts: I have found that a 7' post hammered 2-3' in the ground is plenty high after you have trained the deer. More on that later.
- Electric Fence Tester: To see if the output is optimal from time to time. Amazing how many times something causes a short or.... a wire is left down.
- Insulated Gate Handles: Very helpful on certain gates (driveway), but not necessary in areas where you don't go in and out often.
- Electric Fence Warning Signs/Reflectors: Good idea on the driveway wire so people know not to touch. Most are freaked about it to begin with. Even when someone drives through the driveway wire with the signage (true story), it is not hard to repair.

Installation

Electric fence installation is the part people fear is the most difficult part of the project, but once you get started you will probably find that worrying about it was much more difficult than the installation. Simply develop

a concept plan of your yard and how you would like to protect it. Are your gardens only in the back yard, or are side yards and front yards also landscaped with tasty deer food? Do you hate the thought of having the fencing in your front yard that might be visible to everyone driving by or might it bother you to see it daily? If you do put an electric fence around your front yard, is there a way to run it so it doesn't cross the driveway? If not (and mine has to cross the driveway) are you committed to putting up the fence every evening and taking it down in the morning? I do put mine up/take it down daily.

In addition to the driveway, identify those areas where you might need to get out of the enclosed yard or pass through for things like mowing, taking debris out of the yard, walking over to the neighbor's home, or using an area for accessing another part of your yard or an adjacent yard. These are the areas you will need to plan a gate. Your gate will simply be an extension of your electric fence, but with a break in the wire using insulated gate handles (but it is still connected to the overall fence system). It may (but not always) need insulated handles so that you don't make the mistake of trying to take down the fence when it is electrified, and believe me, you won't make that mistake too many times. The most frequently used gate(s) should have insulated handles.

Decide what types of posts you'll use or combinations of post types. T-Bar (also called T-Post) works well when there are no trees along the border of your property. There is no

real set distance of how far to space your posts or distance between insulators. The wire shouldn't be allowed to sag a whole lot, but if it does sag, often times it is easy to shorten up the wire. Some of my wire has 30'-45' between insulators (insulators not only function to insulate, but also to hold the wire up) other places it may only be 15-20'.

You must use "plastic or some other type of insulators" on the T-Bar or on the trees to keep the wire away from the post or tree and to help support the weight of the wire. These plastic insulators will snap onto T-Bar or you can nail them into a tree. Just make sure the wire doesn't touch the post or tree or it will short out your fence and it will stop working until you find the short in the fence (always keep a wire tester handy for this). Sometimes, even if the wire comes close, the electricity will arc to the bar or post or tree. You will hear a fairly loud snapping and may see the electric arc if it is dark enough (I have fried slugs this way when they climb up the post and come between the wire and the T-Bar). Look at the pictures of insulators below. These are just two examples of them and there are actually quite a few options available even different colors so look around or shop online.



Use galvanized electric fence wire. It is cheap and easy to bend and use. As it oxidizes, it becomes a bit less intrusive because it loses its shininess.

You should be aware that a whitetail deer can jump an 8' fence and you may

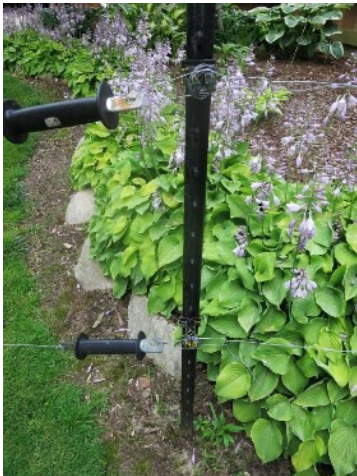


wish to have a higher fence. Having said that, I have found deer to be trainable and so it is generally not necessary to go that high. In fact, my fence is much, much shorter. I use 2 wires with the lower strand set approximately 2-2½ feet off the ground (however, you may want to go higher with 3-4 strands). The second wire is only about 4½-5' from the ground. You only want them far enough apart so a deer can't just slip between wires without touching one wire or the other, so use common sense when spacing them and if deer are slipping through between the wires then shorten the distance between them. Ideally, the top wire should be placed at a height approximately even with where their nose is when standing. This is important because when a deer hits the fence, if it comes in contact with the wire on their nose, they will back up and not break your wire. If they come in contact any higher or lower they will spook and run forward, breaking your wire.

As you spool out the wire during the making of your electric fence, find a rod, a big screw driver, or extra-large and long bolt etc. to slip through the middle of your spool of wire to

roll it out. Not only is it much easier to spool out, but more important, it will not have kinks and get twisted coming off the spool. When twisting occurs, every time you lay your wire down it will take on all sorts of odd shapes that are difficult to straighten back out.

Instead of having one or two long continuous runs of galvanized wire without breaks for gates, periodically breakup the runs of wire at the post or tree. The advantage if this is twofold. You will be able to drop the fence easily wherever and whenever you want. More importantly, when the inevitability of a deer running into the wire occurs, you won't have



the wire all over the place as the deer flies off carrying the wire with it. The easiest way to do this is to cut a piece of galvanized wire and wrap it around the insulator (carefully so it doesn't touch or get close to the T-

Bar) and as you wrap, make a loop(s) that you will use to hook your wire to. You can do this with the insulated handles (pictured above) where you need to have them, or omit the insulated handle and simply bend the wire into a hook and attach it to the loop (pictured below). You simply bend the wire into a hook and attach it to the loop, when a deer hits the wire, the wire will simply come free and not break. When the wire breaks you have to take

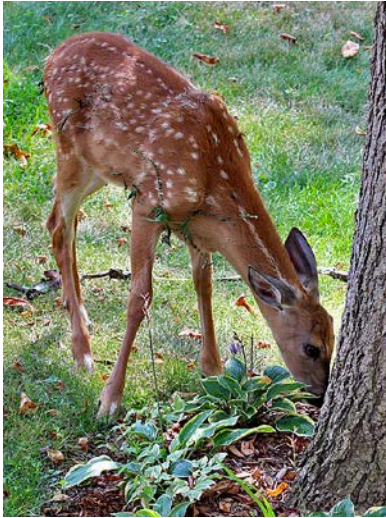
the old off and replace it with new. I have found this simple hooking the wire



into the loop to be almost 100% effective at stopping wire breaks.

Tips and Hints

- Check with you local governing body to make sure their zoning ordinance will permit an electric fence (unless you decide to ask forgiveness rather than permission, as I did). In some communities they are outright disallowed. Other communities may “look the other way” as long as they don't get a complaint. An electric fence is technically treated as any fence would be. Sometimes a permit is required from the building department. They also may only be permitted in the “back yard” since most communities prohibit fencing in the “front yard”. It is also possible that a community might allow it with a special permit, sometimes called a “conditional or special use permit.” If you live in a rural enough area where the likelihood of someone complaining is low, it might be possible to put an electric fence up and hope you don't get a visit from the building inspector. Also, certain neighborhoods and/or subdivisions that have been developed with covenants or deed restrictions might have regulations prohibiting fencing so make sure you are in



compliance before starting. And it's always a good idea to speak with your neighbors first so they are comfortable with what you are doing and understand

that an electric fence is not going to severely hurt anyone. A little diplomacy goes a long way.

- An electric fence is not a looped system. It can end at any point. There is no need to run the wire back to the beginning (closed system).
- Frequently either walk or visually inspect your fence for a breach. Once a wire is broken or down, the system will be shorted out and become inoperable.
- Occasionally check your perimeter for wire that either touched or comes close to something like a T-Bar or the trunk of a tree.
- Keep your electric fence active all year long... even during the winter. This will keep the deer trained to avoid your yard all the time. Part of the success of the electric fence is that it conditions them to associate the visual presence of your fence wire with danger. Deer avoid dangerous situations known to them.

- Deer are very trainable. They don't like getting shocked any more than we do. In order to train them, they need to experience the shock. And I guarantee you they will and for a while you will have to be prepared to daily check your fence and often make repairs to it until you have them trained. To speed up the training process, make strips of aluminum foil that you can wrap around the electric fence wire at various points around your yard. Put some peanut butter on the bottom end of the aluminum

foil strips.

Deer love

peanut

butter.

When they

come to

lick it, they

will get

shocked.

The shock startles them. I mean, really seriously startles them and they quickly come to associate the wire with danger.

Replace peanut butter frequently to keep it fresh, but once trained, you can quit putting the peanut butter out until you

have a rogue deer that hasn't learned the lesson yet. Eventually, you will see deer

around your yard, but they don't make an effort to get in. I believe the does train

their fawns to stay away as well, although in the spring a fawn may wander into the

fence and learn the hard way. The number of fence repairs you have to make should be

reduced significantly after the first full year, but you will need to be diligent that first



year and make sure your fence is up every night and that it is on.

- Use a timer when you are on vacation. You definitely want the fence to be hot at night, but there are times during the day when someone might either come to your house or neighbors get close to it. Tell them the fence is on a timer and, barring a power outage, the wire will not be hot when they come to feed the cat/water your plants. If they are nervous – loan them the electric fence tester. Even if the fence is hot, with a little dexterity, it can be taken down with the insulated handles. Again note, the insulated handles are **ONLY** needed where you anticipate taking down the fence when it is hot!
- Keep weeds and debris away and off from the fence. Keep the wires visible. Seeing the wires is a visual deterrent to the deer.
- Buy an electric fence tester and use it regularly. Sometimes a wire will get close to the metal T-Bar or a nail in the tree and short out the fence without you knowing it. Twice a slug crawled up the T-Bar and when it got close to the wire, the electricity arced to it, fried it and caused the fence to short out until he was a crispy critter. See photo below.



Garden resolutions I will never keep...

Courtesy of members of the GardenWeb Hosta Forum

- I will only make a “few” hosta purchases this year while I finish planting the ones I bought last year.
- I WILL STAY WITHIN MY BUDGET!!
- I will stop referring to the extra money in the budget as the “hosta fund” (That does not mean that I will stop using it as the hosta fund, however!)
- I am going to plant those seeds I collected last fall.
- I will have the beds prepared **BEFORE** I order more hostas.
- I am going to photograph all my beds, label them with the plant names and have a top-notch organizational system.
- I will not start a new project until I finish the last one.
- I will be ruthless - trimming back invasive plants I love and throwing out the excess because I have **NO MORE ROOM!**
- I will remove all the maples from my yard.
- I will weed everyday it’s not raining so it doesn’t seem like such a big deal.
- I will not weed after work in a skirt, just pantsuits!
- I will walk through my gardens more often just to enjoy them, without stopping to pull out a weed.

- I will not care what my neighbors think when I am filthy from head to toe with my hair flying wildly behind my white stretch headband after a day in the garden (like they really care anyway).

Local chapter events

Eastern Michigan Hosta Society Calendar of Events 2019

February 14 - Esther Benedict
Mayfield Twp. Hall in Lapeer, MI

April 11 - Aaron Strouse
Mayfield Twp. Hall in Lapeer, MI

May 9 - Eldred Steinkoph
Mayfield Twp. Hall in Lapeer, MI

June 13 - Garden Tour
The Gavits in Saginaw

July 11 - Garden Tour
The Trotts in Columbiaville

August 8 - Garden Tour
The Marttilas in Lapeer

September 12 - EMHS Plant Exchange
Sun Crest in Lapeer

October 10 - "Amaryllis Presentation"
Mayfield Twp. Hall Lapeer

November 14 - Board Meeting
Whitey's in Davison

December 12 - Annual Christmas Party
Mayfield Twp. Hall Lapeer, MI

Southwest Michigan Hosta Society Calendar of Events 2019

March 24, 3pm
Romence Gardens' new plants

April 28, 3pm
Romence Gardens
Don Rawson "Gardening Amidst Tree Roots"

June bus trip

July 28, Noon-TBA
Potluck/auction

September 22, 3pm
Romence Gardens, Speaker TBA

October 27, 3pm
Romence Gardens, Speaker TBA



*"Gardening requires a lot of water,
most of it in the form of perspiration."*

- Lou Erickson

Officers of MHS

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Membership in the Michigan Hosta Society

If you wish to find out more about Hosta, please consider joining the Michigan Hosta Society. We welcome new members and friends who share our interest in hosta and their many uses in the landscape. The society maintains a large hosta display at Hidden Lake Gardens near Tipton, where many varieties of hosta can be seen. "The Benedict Hosta Hillside" is one of only two nationally designated Hosta display gardens.

Activities of MHS include:

- ▶ A summer tour of gardens that feature Hosta
- ▶ An auction/sale of hostas contributed by members
- ▶ Speakers and educational programs
- ▶ Local chapter meetings
- ▶ A workday and information sharing at Hidden Lake Gardens in Tipton where the Society has a demonstration garden
- ▶ A listing of MHS members who retail Hosta
- ▶ A yearly membership directory

Members receive the Michigan Society Newsletter "Hosta Happenings," as well as the newsletter of the Great Lakes Regional Hosta Society. If you are interested in joining please complete the attached application form.

You may also want to join The American Hosta Society. They have two colorful journals each year, and an annual national convention featuring a Hosta Show, garden tours, scientific programs and a plant auction.

Contact: www.americanhostasociety.org

MHS Membership Application

Last name: _____

First name: _____

Last name of 2nd member: _____

First name of 2nd member: _____

Street Address:

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: _____ - _____ - _____

E-mail:

Choice of **either** black and white newsletter via First Class US Mail or full color newsletter via e-mail. All the pictures are in color and there are often bonus pictures not included in the mailed version. Please check one: Mail E-mail

Check if you wish to receive an updated membership directory when published: _____

New Member: _____ Renewal: _____

Dues are \$15 per household for up to two people, good for 2 years.

Total remitted: _____

Mail to:

Michigan Hosta Society
2509 Wembly Lane
Troy, MI 48084-1280

Make checks payable to: The Michigan Hosta Society