

# MICHIGAN HOSTA HAPPENINGS

Newsletter of the Michigan Hosta Society



## Favorite Tools Make Garden Cleanup Easier

By *Don Rawson*

Garden maintenance does not always have to wait until spring, especially when there are periodic warm spells during the winter. After all, any chores done during the winter will place you in a good position when spring arrives. That's why I always remind myself to do as much as possible in the off season in order to get a jump on spring. Besides, getting some fresh air outdoors is a healthy option to spending so many hours indoors.

Now, I will be the first to say that cleaning up the garden after the previous season is like doing house chores. It seems more like work than enjoyment. That is the downside to a hobby which is supposed to be fun. So, I am always looking for shortcuts in getting those tasks done quickly and easily. That is

where I am reminded of some popular adages: Work smarter, not harder. Do it cheaper and faster. Be more efficient, my boss used to say.

When I step outdoors in winter to survey the backyard, it always looks like a tornado went through. It is a sad sight indeed. I am

thankful that few of my gardening friends stop in at those atrocious times. Things are a wreck. The ground is littered with debris. Leaves have blown in from the neighbor's and have found a resting point at the side of the house and under the bushes. The ornamental grasses need to be cut. Garden ornaments which were previously hidden from view



**A reacher grabber makes easy work out of an otherwise back-breaking chore. Here, Don picks up sticks which are littering the landscape.**

are still waiting for indoor storage. And someone forgot to turn the bird bath on its side. What a mess! And what does it reveal about the gardener himself?

A good gardener is not only ambitious but is also a wise gardener. And a wise gardener is a well-organized and well-equipped gardener. The individual has an adequate assortment of garden tools and he keeps them in good shape. The wise gardener has worked out a monthly garden calendar of what to do when. The person conserves energy by looking for ways to reduce watering and weeding. When it comes to adding new plants to his or her private sanctuary, the wise gardener selects “maintenance-free” varieties (are there any, really?)... those which are easy, hardy, disease-resistant, and reliable. Any self-seeders are avoided. Invasive plants and spreaders are eliminated. Hand edging is reduced or terminated. Underground sprinkling is installed, if there is any way the wise gardener can afford it. This person is always on the search for ways to do things easier... and better.



**Conventional hand-crank spreader vs. the newer battery-powered spreader.**



**A serrated sickle (aka landscape scythe) is the tool of choice for cutting back plants in the fall.**

### **Certain Tools and Supplies Make Gardening Easier**

Just like almost everything else in this day and age, gardening has advanced remarkably. To a degree, it is no longer like how our grandma gardened. She did not have Preen. She did not have slow-release fertilizer. She did not have a digital water timer or a powered garden hose reel. She did not have half of the gardening gadgets which are commonplace nowadays.

The good news for us is that over the years, industry professions have



**A stirrup hoe is more efficient and quicker than a conventional hoe.**

**The trapezoidal shape allows for easy maneuvering between plants for highly effective weeding without disrupting or injuring your precious garden treasures.**

consistently introduced many new accessories to make the gardener's life easier. Does your arm get tired when dispensing fertilizer with a hand-held spreader? There's a solution: a Scotts battery-powered spreader. Is your back aching after hours of weeding? A stirrup hoe is great for weeding in close proximity to your cherished plants. Many of these tools can be a worthwhile investment.

### **A Bucket and a Grabber**

At this point, I'd like to share with you two of my simple, but favorite, garden tools: an 8-gallon bucket and a reacher grabber. It is surprising that sometimes the simple things in life are the best.

When weeding the garden, the 5-gallon bucket is generally our go-to container for weed disposal, and if you are like me, 5-gallon buckets seem to accumulate from

who knows where. I put them in the shed and they must breed! They work reasonably well, but they fill up fast when I get serious about my weeding chore. My time during those weeding days involves dumping the bucket more than pulling or digging out the weeds – an interruption which costs both time and energy.

Did you know that an 8-gallon bucket is 60% larger than a 5-gallon bucket, and yet it is easy to carry and maneuver? That means that time spent dumping the bucket is substantially reduced. The larger bucket is also better-suited for larger weeds. When doing garden cleanup, you can place larger sticks and more leaves and pine cones in an 8-gallon bucket than in the smaller 5-gallon size. When mulching, it holds more woodchips or shredded bark. The size difference may seem insignificant until you try it, but once you switch up to the larger container, you will love it!

Eight-gallon buckets, called fermenting buckets, are available from brewing and fermentation suppliers for making batches of your favorite home brew. But when it comes to purchasing one for the garden, you do not need the lid or the spigot – you only need the container itself. Go to your local brew shop and they will sell you just the bucket. It will be well worth having an 8-gallon bucket in your gardening arsenal.

The other tool that I have recently discovered is the reacher grabber. Typically, this clever invention is for older people (like me) who can't bend over and for those folks who are vertically challenged, in which getting something off the top shelf is a near impossibility without getting a ladder. A reacher grabber makes life much more



manageable. For the gardener, it saves on your back and legs. Hosta gardeners generally have forested landscapes, which is ideal for growing hostas. However, all of those trees drop many sticks and twigs which litter the forest floor, not to mention spent flowers, seed pods, acorns, walnuts, pine cones, and so on. A reacher grabber is your answer to what otherwise is a back-breaking job. It actually turns a tedious task into an entertaining activity.

Now, on a final note I should mention that a reacher grabber and an 8-gallon bucket go hand-in-hand. The bigger bucket will allow you to pick up larger sticks than a 5-gallon bucket can hold and you can place them in the bucket with the reacher grabber without much precision in mind. With these tools in hand, you will be unstoppable when it comes to fall cleanup... or when venturing into the garden during those warm mid-winter spells. In any case, the important thing is to have fun – because this is the way that time in the garden should be!



**A 32-inch reacher grabber is the perfect size for picking up sticks and placing them into a bucket. This model (E-Z Reacher 32S EZ) is ideal. Available from Tractor Supply for \$19.99.**



**An 8-gallon bucket is 60% larger than the common 5-gallon bucket, and yet it is still easy to carry and maneuver. It accommodates more weeds and larger sticks, and it does not need to be emptied as often.**

*All photos in this article provided by Don Rawson.*

# Heuchera

By Hans Hansen

I can't remember when I was first introduced to heuchera, although I do know it was when I was very young. We had a border of *Heuchera sanguinea* in the vegetable garden and called them coral bells. They were used primarily as a filler in cut flower arrangements. We lived on a dairy farm near a small town and all the "good gardeners" grew them. My family used them in cut flower arrangements to take to church on Sundays, and florists used them for wedding arrangements and birthdays. They were tough garden plants and divisions were passed around to gardeners that didn't have any.

I remember getting the Wayside Gardens catalog as a teenager – pretty much my only connection to the outside gardening world. In the 1980s there was a heuchera cultivar that hit the market called 'Mt. Saint Helens' with red flowers, and a couple selections with white flowers including 'June Bride'.

In the late 1980s I went to college for Horticulture. We used Steven Still's *Manual of Herbaceous Ornamental Plants* (copyright 1988) for Annual and Perennial Plant Identification. I remember studying the 4 pages on heuchera. *Heuchera americana* was mentioned as an excellent choice for foliage for the woodland garden. The other species of note was *Heuchera sanguinea*. This was THE coral bell everyone knew and loved, and "extensive breeding work has resulted in a number of good hybrids" with 15 of them listed. Steven Still went on to mention coral bells were useful in the full





Heuchera landscape



*Heuchera sanguinea*



Heuchera 'Dale's Strain'



Heuchera landscape

sun to partial shaded perennial border and for attracting hummingbirds.

Heucheras are native only to North America, primarily the United States, although 4 species are found in Mexico. Of the 35 or so species they can be group into 2 types: the eastern US woodland types and the western Rocky Mountain types. *Heuchera americana* falls into the former, *H. sanguinea* the latter category.

One of the pivotal moments in the evolution of modern day heuchera development is credited to Dale Hendricks who ran North Creek Nursery. North Creek



'Thierry' New Breeding

was a perennial wholesale nursery with an emphasis on native plants. Dale discovered a choice selection of *Heuchera americana* with prominent dark burgundy veins and a silver overlay to the leaf while hiking in the mountains of North Carolina. This plant propelled a nice native wildflower into the American Horticulture scene and propagation made it available to nurseries and the gardening public. Dale originally

called his strain 'Silver Selection,' but it was later officially named 'Dale's Strain' by Alan Bush who at the time ran a specialty nursery called Holbrook Farm.

The second genetic leap in the modern heuchera development occurred when Brian Halliwell, a curator at Kew's Royal Botanical Garden, discovered a very nice purple



Hans breeding heuchera

leaved form of *villosa f. purpurea* and named it H. 'Palace Purple'. Allen Bush, with his keen eye for superior plants introduced 'Palace Purple' to American gardeners in 1986. Heuchera 'Palace Purple' was awarded the PPA Perennial of the Year in 1991, one of the first perennials in the Plant of the Year Program. Both Heuchera 'Dales Strain' and 'Palace Purple' are seed strains. Individual seedlings under that name are

similar but not identical, and in the case of 'Palace Purple' the strain has improved in color and form over the generations.

In the late 1980s, Nancy Goodwin of Hillsborough, North Carolina discovered a chance hybrid in a flat of heuchera seedlings. At that time, Nancy ran Montrose, a specialty nursery concentrating on rare and unusual plants for the southeast, growing many of her offerings from seed. She also maintained a large, well-designed garden to this day specializing in cyclamen and galanthus. This amazing chance hybrid between 'Palace Purple' and 'Dales Strain' had an incredible dark purple leaf with silver overlay. Nancy named it 'Montrose Ruby' after her garden.

One of the first people to intentionally hybridize heuchera in the US was Charles Oliver from Scottdale, Pennsylvania. A keen plantsman, he and his wife Martha worked with heucheras, including Nancy's Heuchera 'Montrose Ruby' to take the genus to yet another level. Some of his finest selections include 'Regina', 'Sterling Silver' and 'Frosted Violet.' Charles did amazing pioneering work combining foliage color, plant vigor, and floral performance. He also had a series of choice rock garden plants called the Petite Series that have beautiful red and silver leaves with pink flowers. 'Petite Marble Burgundy' and 'Petite Pear' are in that series. His nursery – The Primrose Path — was one of the first nurseries to offer clonally propagated heuchera from tissue culture on the market.

The coral bell world will forever be indebted to Dan Heims from Portland, Oregon. Dan's first heuchera discovery was a splashed variegated form of *Heuchera sanguinea* he

found at a retail nursery and later named 'Snow Storm'. Fueled by his passion of plants and the success of this plant in the trade, he immersed himself in heuchera breeding and took the American heuchera arena by storm. Some of his early work included 'Plum Pudding', 'Amethyst Mist', and 'Purple Petticoats'. By concentrating on leaf color and shape he intensified the purples and developed reds and near-blacks. Another heuchera leap occurred in the late 1990s when he discovered a yellow sport from Heuchera 'Whirlwind'. This amber-gold heuchera was the first yellow heuchera to hit the market and formed the building blocks for all future heucheras of that color. Through the years and generations Dan and his team incorporated additional species into the breeding including micrantha, which added ruffling to the leaf margins. Dan's success with heuchera breeding led to the formation of the company Terra Nova, which included a tissue culture lab to propagate and distribute to the wholesale trade his amazing plants. They currently list around 65 heucheras.

In the mid-2000s, French nurseryman Thierry Delabroye crossed 'Bronze Beauty' x an unknown villosa seedling. The resulting plant he named 'Caramel' which had amazing vigor and sun tolerance. This wonderful golden orange appropriately named 'Caramel' combines so well with blue leaved hostas and other shade loving plants. The hybrid vigor from *Heuchera villosa* also gave it heat- and humidity-tolerance, enabling it to perform well across the US and the world. 'Caramel' has sold in the millions and is the benchmark for all other landscape heucheras. Early in the tissue culture process a solid yellow plant



was found that was named 'Citronelle'. This plant also has the *Heuchera villosa* genes but lacks the sun tolerance that 'Caramel' has with the addition of the darker pigment. Thierry went on to breed many more heucheras including 'Mocha', 'Tiramisu', and 'Mega Caramel'.

A major influencer in the evolution of heuchera in the marketplace is Luc Klinkhamer of The Netherlands. During the 1990s and 2000s



he traveled extensively throughout the world looking for plants to propagate and promote through the company he worked for, CNB. Aside from having a good eye for plants, Luc also had the knack for networking and building relationships between plant breeders and nurseries to propagate and distribute the plant on behalf of the hybridizer. In the days before the internet and social media, Luc was often traveling. He was the liaison between the



horticultural hot spots in the US and working on supply chain distribution into Europe and vice versa. Luc was instrumental in the success of Thierry Delabroye's Heuchera 'Caramel' and other varieties becoming readily available in the US, and the Terra Nova varieties being marketed in Europe.

During my years from college until I worked at Walters, I gardened on a 5-acre property that was native woods. I worked at Shady Oaks Nursery in Waseca, Minnesota that was a retail nursery specializing in hardy shade perennials. During the 15 years I worked and gardened in southern Minnesota I watched the evolution of the heuchera development and grew many of the varieties in my sandy woodland soil.

In the spring of 2009, my horticulture journey took me to Zeeland, Michigan to begin a career as a full-time professional

plant hybridizer. One of the 80 genera of plant I began to work with was heuchera, with the intention to breed and select for varieties with exceptional leaf color that combined the flowers of the classic and

historical *Heuchera sanguinea*. Foremost to the selection process was garden constitution in our zone 6 Michigan soil. Each year we make hundreds of sets of crosses to further our goal. During my time at Walters, we have developed 26 selections that have been put on the market. They are the results of 2,000 sets of distinct crosses, each replicated many times to ensure we will see the full expression of genetic diversity from the parents. The best of the resulting seedlings have gone through a series of evaluation and

performance reviews, including durability and performance in the landscape, overall attractiveness, followed by container performance and finish time, and lastly performance and ease of nursery production for uniformity and finish times.



## Currently Walters Gardens has 5 series of heucheras:

1. The Timeless Series is our most compact collection; they are perfect for container display, the front of the woodland border, or rock gardens. This series was launched with 'Berry Timeless,' which has a multitude of light pink flowers on proportionate foliage above the lightly silvered green foliage. Following the introduction and success of 'Berry Awesome' the series was flushed out with 'Grape Timeless', 'Timeless Treasure', 'Timeless Glow', and my personal favorite, 'Timeless Night'. Heuchera 'Timeless Night' has near-black color fast foliage that does well in full sun here in Michigan. Proportionate rosy pink flowers just barely top the clump and have a very long season of bloom. The Timeless Series are remontant bloomers, and the flowers cover the plants repeatedly throughout the summer and fall.

2. The general varieties I developed while working at Walters Gardens include 'Grape Expectations', 'Electric Plum', 'Lemon Love', 'Pink Panther', and 'Smoke and Mirrors'. These have exceptional heat and humidity tolerance and are good reliable performers



for us.

- H. 'Grape Expectations' has excelled in Raleigh, NC in full sun after numerous above 90-degree days.
- 'Lemon Love' forms a large clump over time. Our original seedling in the evaluation bed measured over 50" wide by the time it was introduced. Although the flowers will never steal the show, the leaves have more resistance to the burning from higher light than earlier yellow selections.
- 'Pink Panther' always brings a smile to my face. It is perhaps the heuchera with the pinkest pigment in its foliage. It has a strong constitution and performs well in the landscape.
- 'Smoke and Mirrors' is our latest offering in the general line up. This plant again performed very well in the southern US. I have pictures of it in full sun looking sweet in November.

3. In the Proven Winners program, the Dolche Series features plants that are easy to grow and extremely versatile. They are mid-size varieties and look good in the container as well as in the ground. The Dolche Series features 'Apple Twist,' 'Cherry Truffle', 'Silver Gumdrops', 'Spearmint', 'Toffee Tart' and 'Wildberry'.

- 'Apple Twist' is a chameleon, forever changing throughout the season. In the spring it emerges with red infused curly leaves that emerge to chartreuse-yellow heart-shaped leaves with extremely rippled edges. As the season progresses the yellow matures to apple green.
- 'Cherry Truffles' has extremely ruffled red leaves with a nice shiny gloss. It has good sun tolerance, and compared to other reds on the market it has good vigor and staying power in the landscape.

- ‘Silver Gumdrop’ has a profusion of rose-pink flowers above iridescent rose leaves covered in silver blush.
- Heuchera ‘Spearmint’ is as close as we have to grandma’s classic coral bell, the silvery-green leaves are the perfect foliage to the profusion of reddish pink flowers.
- ‘Toffee Tart’ has a medley of varying shades of ginger and caramel throughout the growing season, the spring newly emerging leaves have a silver overlay.
- ‘Wildberry’ might possibly be my favorite heuchera. It has very glossy, scalloped leaves that are a bright, intense purple. The intensity and clarity of the color does not diminish over the season. This has amazing sun tolerance here in zone 6, and pairs so well with many other textures and foliage in the garden. My favorite color echoes are in the garden with Penstemon ‘Midnight Masquerade’, Delphinium ‘Pink Punch’ and Muhlenbergia ‘Undaunted’. This is our number 2 selling Heuchera, and is the 2022 Proven Winners Perennial Plant of the Year.

4. The Proven Winners Primo Series is comprised of heuchera with substantial landscape presence. With the larger size clumps, they compete with hostas for the architectural presence in the landscape.

- ‘Black Pearl’ is the signature plant in this series, the shiny jet-black glossy leaves are distinguishable at a distance. It has a dense full habit with gently ruffled leaf margins. Combining this with yellow hostas and shade grasses make for stunning combinations. This is our number one selling heuchera.
- ‘Mahogany Monster’ has 6” wide leaves and forms a 2.5-3 foot clump of foliage. It is not as vivid a shade of cherry red

compared to ‘Cherry Truffles’, but it makes a massive statement in the garden.

- ‘Peachberry Ice’ is another personal favorite because of the apricot orange leaves. The newly emerging leaves have a rose overtone that is replaced with silver marbling on mature leaves. The design possibilities are endless, but this looks especially nice with blue hostas.
- ‘Pistachio Ambrosia’ forms a vigorous mound of chartreuse-yellow leaves topped with nice pink flowers. Again, a great plant to lighten up shaded areas.
- ‘Wild Rose’ has leaves that are distinctly rose purple compared to the glossy purple foliage of ‘Wildberry’. Lovely rosy pink flowers top the clump.

5. The Dressed-Up Collection is the latest series in the Proven Winners branded heuchera lineup.

- ‘Evening Gown’ has huge glossy black leaves with an incredible ruffled leaf margin. It looks stunning in a large urn or combined in a mixed planting with yellow flowered plants or foliage.
- ‘Ball Gown’ is the companion to ‘Evening Gown’ – it matches the habit and ruffled margin but has a chartreuse yellow leaf coloration.



We are so fortunate to have lived and gardened during the heuchera revolution. From the understated beauty and interest of 'Dale's Strain', and the purple coloration of 'Palace Purple', we have evolved to the classic 'Spearmint' and 'Wildberry.' These color transformations have really created so many opportunities for color echoes and textural and color contrasts for clever garden designers. The caramel and ginger colors look especially nice paired with blue hostas and sedges. Perhaps the most impressive color garden design I've seen was at the Juniper Level Botanic Gardens. The clever garden designer combined 'Smoke and Mirrors' in mass with *Carex appalachia* for four seasons of interest. As icing on the cake, *Iris hollandica* 'Red Ember' flowered between and among the plants in late April, creating an amazing effect.

Heucheras have gained popularity primarily because of their wide range of foliage color; their ability to look great in a container in a nursery or garden center for a long period of time; and many are evergreen and have 4 seasons of appeal. They also have been easy to mass produce economically in tissue



culture, and they perform fairly well from zone 4-9, which is much of the US. At Walters Gardens we sell over 1 million heucheras plants a year and they are

number 4 as a genus in plants sold annually, behind hostas, hemerocallis, and hibiscus. In Europe, gardeners capitalize on their container presence and use them for their foliage presence in containers and mixed plantings on their patios and decks. In contrast, American gardeners often use heucheras for seasonal display. Plants are rotated in and out throughout the seasons much like annuals.

In my home garden I use heuchera in nearly every bed. Along the sidewalk to the front entrance, red

foliated selections pair nicely with dwarf concolor fir and with red chrysanthemums for a brilliant fall display. 'Black Pearl' pairs nicely with *Alchemilla mollis* for stark contrast in texture and color. 'Grape Expectations' borders the burgundy-colored peonies in the spring, and the caramel-colored varieties edge the sun perennial border, with the blue flowered agapanthus in front of the shrub hedge of *Physocarpus* 'Diablo' ninebark and *Cotinus* smoke bush. Perhaps my favorite garden memory is the newly emerging foliage of Heuchera 'Mahogany Monster' with matching spring tulips. The possibilities are endless!

*All photos in this article provided by Hans Hansen.*

# Save the Dates!

## ✓ March 17-18, 2023

2023 Hosta College will be in-person March 17-18 in Piqua, OH. Details can be found at the Great Lakes Region website at <https://hostacollege.org/> (Tailgate information also found here).



## ✓ May 20, 2023

MHS Spring Meeting at Hosta Hillside Hidden Lake Gardens. More details to come in a separate flyer.

## ✓ June 7-10, 2023

*Fields of Hosta Dreams* American Hosta Society National Convention in Ames, Iowa.



### ✓ July 7-9, 2023

MHS Tailgate 2023 will be hosted by the Western New York Hosta Society in Hamburg, NY July 7, 8, and 9<sup>th</sup>. Once again, as in 2015, we will team up and tailgate with Hamburg Village Open Gardens, so we will offer over 35 village of Hamburg private gardens for touring. There will be many Hosta Society members opening their gardens in the Greater Buffalo area, as well.



### ✓ July 13-15, 2023

*Hosta dreamin'* Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention in Rochester, MN. More information can be found at [www.midwesthostasociety.org](http://www.midwesthostasociety.org)

**Don't Miss**  
*the Convention of your dreams!*

**Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention**

**July 13-15 • Rochester, MN**

**Best Western Rochester Hotel**

Information: <http://www.midwesthostasociety.org>  
Preview video: <https://tinyurl.com/hostadreamin>

*Hosta dreamin'*  
2023 MRHS Convention

## Unusual Woodlanders for the Shade Garden: Christmas Fern

By Don Rawson

Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) is a perennial, evergreen fern found throughout eastern North America. The common name comes from the evergreen fronds which are often still green at Christmas.

As one of the few native ferns which is evergreen, it is sometimes available as a Christmas decoration. Furthermore, each of its leaf segments resemble a traditional Christmas stocking, or even Santa's boot.

### Origin of Scientific Name

The scientific name *Polystichum acrostichoides* has an interesting origin. "Polystichum" comes from the Greek word

*polys* meaning *many*, and *stichos* meaning *in a row*... "many in a row" referring to its clusters of spore cases which are arranged in rows on the backsides of the leaf segments. The word "acrostichoides" means "similar to *Acrostichum*," another fern genus with nearly identical spore cases.

### Distribution and Habitat

Native to this continent from eastern Canada west to Minnesota and south to Florida and eastern Texas, the Christmas fern is one of the most common ferns in eastern North America. You certainly would encounter it if you hike the Appalachian Trail, as it is plentiful throughout the Blue Ridge Mountains.

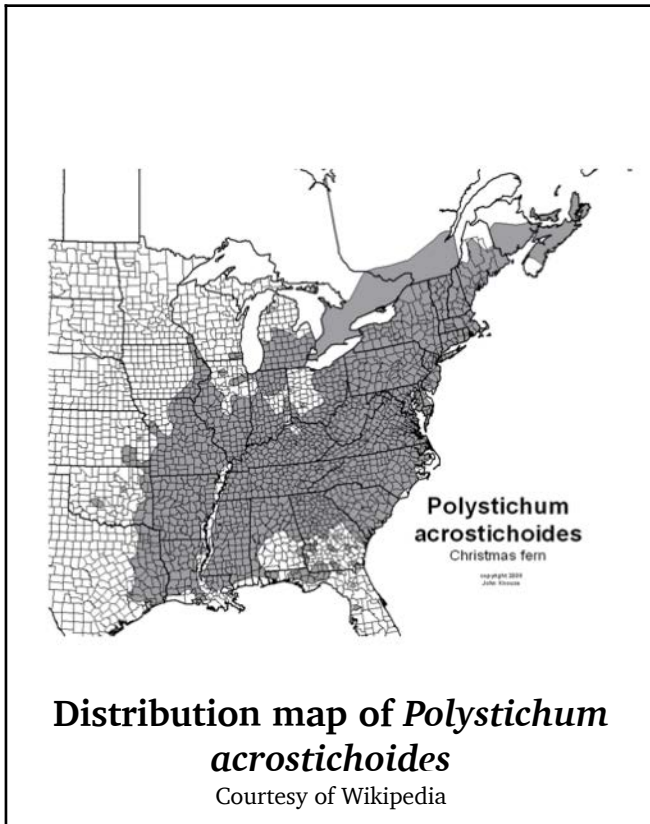
This beautiful woodland fern occurs on forested slopes, moist banks, and shady ravines. It generally grows in a fountain-like clump to 2' tall and features leathery, lance-shaped, dark green fronds. It looks



**The individual leaf segments of the Christmas fern are thought to resemble a Christmas stocking or Santa's boot. The fronds are still dark green at Christmastime and remain green throughout the remainder of winter. They are held semi-erect until a heavy snow forces them to lie prostrate on the ground. As a result, Christmas fern may require some pruning in spring to look its absolute in spring to look its absolute best.**

Photo courtesy of Wikipedia





somewhat akin to the Boston fern, a popular fern species that grows in many tropical areas around the world. The Boston fern is a very popular house plant, often grown in hanging baskets. However, the Boston fern is hardy only to zones 9-11, which makes the Christmas fern a good alternative for colder climates. It does well in zones 3-9, a much wider range than the Boston fern.

### Culture

Christmas fern is well-suited for the shade or part-shade garden. It is easy to cultivate in a range of environments. This fern is tolerant of moist or dry soil, and will even survive in drought and in shallow, rocky soil. Deer and rabbits do not bother it, and there are no serious insect or

disease problems that affect Christmas fern.

The Missouri Botanical Garden has Christmas fern listed among their “Plants of Merit.” To be entered on the list, a plant must meet certain standards, as follows:

### Missouri Botanical Garden Plants of Merit Selection Criteria

- Easy to grow and maintain
- Not known to be invasive
- Resistant or tolerant to diseases and insects
- Has outstanding ornamental value
- Reasonably available to purchase

This easy-to-grow fern is very adaptable. It may be planted in shady areas along walls or foundations, and is an elegant plant when used as a ground cover under shade trees or for massing on slopes to help combat soil erosion.

Christmas fern grows in clumps that increase in size over time. Young fiddleheads which emerge in spring are silvery and scaled. Being evergreen, the glossy, dark green fronds provide good interest in the landscape all winter long.

**Young fiddleheads of the Christmas fern are silvery white. They unfurl in early spring among the recumbent green fronds of the prior year.**

Photo courtesy of Wikipedia





**Christmas ferns provide an excellent contrast in texture to *Hosta* 'Climax' in the Rawson garden.**

#### **As a Companion Among Hostas**

For gardeners scratching their heads over what to plant in those shady areas along with hostas, the Christmas fern is a premier option. It should be a top consideration since the Christmas fern forms a wonderful background to other shade-loving



***Hosta* 'Snow on Everest' in the foreground, *Astilboides tabularis* in the background, and Christmas ferns everywhere.**

woodlanders such as Variegated Solomon's Seal, Heuchera, Strawberry Begonia, Pulmonarias, Hellebores, Jack-in-the-Pulpits, Mayapples, and more.

Texture is one of those all too important design elements that is often overlooked. Ferns can help tremendously. The lacy fronds contrast nicely with the broad, splendid, colorful leaves of hostas, and that is where the magic happens. Christmas ferns are just some of the old friends that, when sited properly, perform for years and years with ease.

If you visit us, you will quickly discover that the Christmas fern is the backbone of the Rawson garden. Some folks may even tend to think that we overuse it, since it is everywhere and in every bed. We absolutely love everything about the fern, especially its year-round interest and its easy-to-grow personality.



**The dark blue leaves of *Hosta* 'Deep Blue Sea' really stand out with Christmas ferns in the background.**

If you have not included the Christmas fern in your own landscape, then it is time to do some after-Christmas shopping and purchase some of these beautiful ferns from your local nursery, or from one of the mail order sources. They are quite affordable and are easy to find. Happy gardening!

*All photos in this article provided by Don Rawson.*

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## Excitement is growing about the 2023 Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention!

### Midwest Regional Hosta Convention Coming to Rochester, July 13-15, 2023

Garden enthusiasts from around the country are expected to attend the annual Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention, July 13-15, 2023, at the Best Western Rochester Hotel gather in Rochester, Minnesota. The Convention is hosted and organized by the Shades of Green Hosta Society of Southeast Minnesota.

The theme of the Convention, *Hosta Dreamin'*, reflects the ever-expanding love of and interest in hostas, which have become integral components of regional gardens due to their wide variety in color and size and ability to thrive in Minnesota's Zone 4 climate.

Each Convention attendee will receive an exclusive Convention Hosta that has never before been offered to the public.

Additionally, the first 75 Convention registrants before May 1, 2023 will receive a second gift plant, Hosta 'Candy Kisses.'

Convention highlights include a kick-off BBQ at the breathtaking gardens of Camp Creek Farm in Preston, MN, tours of five spectacular gardens featuring vast collections of hostas in diverse landscape designs, educational sessions presented by world-class experts, an accredited Hosta Show, a Rod Kuenster Seedling Show, a live auction, a raffle, vendors offering hostas of all varieties, garden art and more, hospitality, and a few surprises. The Hosta and Seedling Shows and the vending area will be open to the public at specified times, allowing visitors to experience first-hand the captivating colors, shapes and sizes that Hostas afford.

Registration and further information at: <http://www.midwesthostasociety.org>.

Convention Preview Video at: <https://tinyurl.com/hostadreamin>





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## *Presidents of the three local Michigan chapters*

### **Eastern Michigan Hosta Society**

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### **Southwest Michigan Hosta Society**

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### **West Michigan Hosta Society**

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## *Hosta College Board Members*

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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

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](http://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