

# MICHIGAN HOSTA HAPPENINGS

Newsletter of the Michigan Hosta Society



## Greetings hostaphiles...

We hope your gardens are doing well and are weed free. Don Rawson has some tips to help you go weedless in your gardens in this edition of Hosta Happenings. In June we had our annual hosta plant sale. Libby Greanya will tell you about her experience after her first sale at Hidden Lake Gardens. She is not a novice at MHS plant sales however, and has assisted in past plant sales when we were located at the Soil and Science building at Michigan State University.

Don Rawson will highlight another shade tolerant plant for you to grow. Astilbe 'Chocolate Shogun' is going to appeal to anyone who likes a very dark foliage and a pink blush flower to contrast the chocolate-bronze leaves.

Yes, astilbes are shade tolerant and this one can be somewhat sun tolerant as well if provided adequate water.

Our next MHS meeting will be August 25th at Hidden Lake Gardens, 6214 Monroe Road (Hwy M-50), Tipton, MI. More information will be sent to you a couple of weeks before



Photo by Marla Greanya

the meeting. For hosta hybridizers, the next meeting will be on November 3rd located at Matthaei Botanic Garden, 1800 N Dixboro Rd, Ann Arbor, MI.

A new website for Michigan Hosta Society is currently being worked on at [https://](https://mihostasociety.org)

[mihostasociety.org](https://mihostasociety.org). Explore the updated, colorful site as a guest or member.

Members get access to current and past newsletters and a photo gallery of events. The password to access information within the website is **MHS2024**. Our MHS president Ed Steinbrecher is working with our webmaster Joan VanSickler — a Southwest Michigan Hosta Society member — to populate the website with photos from past to present and you will be able to access a membership directory,

Treasurer's reports, as well as past newsletters. Any questions you may have should now be addressed through the "Contact" link on that webpage.

*Mike Greanya  
Jackson, Michigan*

## The 34 Minute Plant Sale

By Libby Greanya

On Friday, June 14, 2024 the small crew of Ed Steinbrecher, Joan Vansickler, Lisa Quiggle, and Michael Greanya set up the MHS hosta plant sale. This required multiple trips by Ed and Michael to our plant grower's location 36 miles from Hidden Lake Gardens to transport 500 one-gallon pots of hosta to the lower level of the Hidden Lake Gardens visitor center. Many miles were put on vehicles, backs, knees, and feet. Lisa and Joan received the plants and they were beautifully displayed on the tables covered with maroon plastic table cloths.

The next morning, Michael and I arrived for the hosta sale an hour before Hidden Lake

Gardens opens and noticed there were already two cars waiting at the gate to enter. They were approached by HLG staff and the early hosta enthusiasts said, "We know you don't open until nine. We just didn't want to arrive late to the hosta sale!"

The sale was scheduled from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. but should have been advertised as "9 a.m. until sold out".

Eye witness reports from Hidden Lake Garden staff and customers indicated there was a long line of cars waiting to enter by 9 a.m. "Cars were backed up all the way to M-50 and I couldn't make a left into Hidden Lake Gardens so I had to turn around on M-50 and come back to the entrance from a different direction." As the cars approached the Administration building where the plant sale was located, many slowed the car and one person jumped out to start shopping and one person went to park the car farther



Photo by Michael Greanya

away. Walking was optional, but jogging and sprinting up the stairs were a common tactic to get inside before other competitors. It was that much of a frenzy!

When I arrived early on Saturday morning, I was not fully acquainted with the many varieties of hostas that would be for sale and regretted that I had not done any homework. There were no more than three of one type of hosta. For example, there were three H. 'Mini Skirt', one H. 'Coast to Coast' and one H. 'Leading Lady', all priced at \$10.00 per pot. There is no set list of hosta that will be sold. Our grower makes executive last-minute decisions on what hosta look good enough to sell. She won't release substandard plants or those with imperfections.

It turns out that if I had done my "homework" in preparation of sales it would've been for naught. The dense crowd grabbed up so many hosta so quickly that every single one of the 500+ hostas were gone by 9:34 a.m. The generous stacks of strawberry boxes that Lisa Quiggle brought for customers to carry their treasures were quickly depleted. Smart people brought their own boxes or wagon although I would not encourage wagons as the room was congested with many tables and the aisles were fairly narrow.

The limiting factor with the sale was that we only had two cashiers, Ed and Joan, but it turns out it was okay. In general, gardeners are patient people and a lot of good information was exchanged by animated and cheerful hostaholics while waiting in line. It was also an excellent time for me to move the few remaining hostas that hadn't been chosen so that the line was

forced to pass by them, much as you buy a package of gum or a candy bar at the grocery store while you're waiting for the cashier. Easy sales.

Indeed, as cashier Joan pointed out, the sale could have ended much earlier than 9:34 a.m. If there have been more cashiers, we might've sold out and cleared the room in a mere 15 to 20 minutes!

As we were cleaning up and tearing down tables, very disappointed new customers began arriving to an empty room.

"We just drove 44 miles from Ypsilanti!".  
"We came all the way from Detroit!" Two



Photo by Marla Greanya

customers came from Tecumseh, which is not that far, and one from Temperance. And those are only the ones that came to the room.

When we were sold out, that information was promptly posted on the electronic HLG

media or Facebook. By the way, the \$10 per person entrance fee was not waived for the plant sale, although most of the initial attendees of the plant sale were members who do not pay an entrance fee. The gate house was so busy by the sudden crush of cars, the gatekeepers did not have time to



sign on the road — outside of the gate — so there were likely many more that were turned away.

Joan took this opportunity to recruit people to join the Michigan Hosta Society and we answered a few gardening questions so it was hopefully not a total loss for the people who were late to the party.

The weather was perfect and so it was a good day for customers to go on the Sky Canopy Walk, visit the Bonsai Collection and Harper Conifer Collection, etc. Many customers were members of Hidden Lake Gardens and heard of the sale via HLG

record the member ID numbers — people just waved their membership card and drove on through!

Ed, Joan, Lisa, Michael, and I were not the only ones shocked by the massive attendance. Hidden Lakes staff were agape but happy as well. We look forward to next year's plant sale and we thank the staff, who were very helpful, and Hidden Lake Gardens for allowing us to have our annual fundraiser at their facility.

## *Unusual Woodlanders for the Shade Garden: Astilbe ‘Chocolate Shogun’*

*By Don Rawson*

Astilbes are knockout plants, bringing color and texture to the shady parts of the garden. With feathery, plume-like flowers held high above the foliage, astilbes add drama and texture when combined with hostas and other broadleaved shade garden plants. Flower colors vary from white, pink

and deep red, to soft lavender and violet. All are attractive to bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects.

Hardy to zones 3-8, these beautiful plants perform best in partial shade, but they will also grow well in full shade. In northern climates including Michigan, most astilbe varieties will tolerate full day sun. Cool, moist soil encourages strong root growth.

Astilbes, also known as “False Spirea” and “False Goat’s Beard,” produce masses of attractive ferny foliage. Even if they never bloomed, the healthy foliage of these plants adds wonderful texture and color to a



Photo by Freep!k. Used by permission.

**Astilbes combine well with other shade-tolerant plants such as hostas. Their colorful plumes and lacy, deeply-cut leaves contrast beautifully against variegated, broadleaved hostas.**

garden. In spring, new foliage emerges bright green with blushes of bronze. Some varieties hold that color all year long, and others offer deep chocolate or burgundy foliage.

### The Darkest of the Dark

If you are a lover of dark — almost black — foliage, then you will fall in love with Astilbe ‘Chocolate Shogun’. The deep, richly-colored leaves are outstanding!

With its very dark foliage and contrasting pale pinkish white plumes, ‘Chocolate



Photo by American Meadows. Used by permission.

**Exquisite and dramatic, the dark purple to almost chocolate brown serrated foliage of ‘Chocolate Shogun’ will certainly draw attention in your landscape. The dark foliage does not fade or turn greenish, maintaining its chocolatey complexion all summer long.**

Shogun’ will certainly command attention in your shade garden. Furthermore, this cultivar is reported to be more sun tolerant than other astilbe varieties, but nevertheless does best in a shaded to dappled shade environment.

‘Chocolate Shogun’ is a foliar breakthrough, created by Japanese breeder Nagasaki Teruhisa, who selected it from a seedling bed of *Astilbe thunbergia* in 2010. The addition of *shogun* to the cultivar name refers to the strong power of ancient Japanese dictators. According to history, beginning in 797 A.D. these Japanese shoguns took control of the whole government. These successions were passed on from father to son for centuries.

‘Chocolate Shogun’ reaches a height of 3’ by a width of 2’. Spikes of pale pink flowers appear in mid-June. The flower plume is composed of hundreds of tiny flowers that open in succession, giving ‘Chocolate Shogun’ a long season of bloom. A plant patent (PP26430) was granted by the USPTO in 2016.

### A Companion for Hostas

Perfect for the woodland garden, astilbes team up well with other shade-tolerant plants such as hostas. Their bold, rosy plumes and lacy, deeply-cut leaves contrast beautifully against variegated hosta leaves. They also combine well with *Heuchera*, *Brunnera*, *Hakonechloa* (Japanese Forest Grass), *Ligularia*, ferns, and hellebores. The dark-leaved ‘Chocolate Shogun’ would look fabulous if sited in front of large, bright gold hostas such as ‘Coast to Coast’ and ‘Key West’.

These shade garden favorites are perfect for lining pathways, creating a transition from lawn to woodland or beneath spreading shade trees. They even thrive in containers, making them ideal for adding a natural touch to a deck, patio or covered porch. Just remember that during a hot, dry summer, you should certainly water, as drying out can be fatal for the plant.

### Planting and Growing Tips

Astilbes should be planted in well-drained soil that stays relatively moist throughout the growing season. Best planted in spring, they prefer soil that has a loose texture and is high in organic matter. Adding compost to the planting area will improve the soil and help retain moisture.

After planting, mulch around the plants to reduce moisture loss and help keep the root zone cool. Mulching with organic materials such as compost, shredded bark, or shredded leaves will add nutrients and gradually improve the soil's ability to retain moisture.

If planted in a boggy or regularly watered bed, astilbes can sit in full sun. Otherwise, choose a semi-shaded or shaded location. They are water-loving plants and require a good dose of nutrients to look their best. They will not grow in chalky or clay soil that dries out in summer.

For best results divide the clumps every 3 to 4 years, removing old and dead rhizomes in early spring. Get rid of the old leaves and flowers from the previous year. If grown in poor soil, you may need to cut back the entire plant after flowering to get rid of spent stems and tired foliage. This will

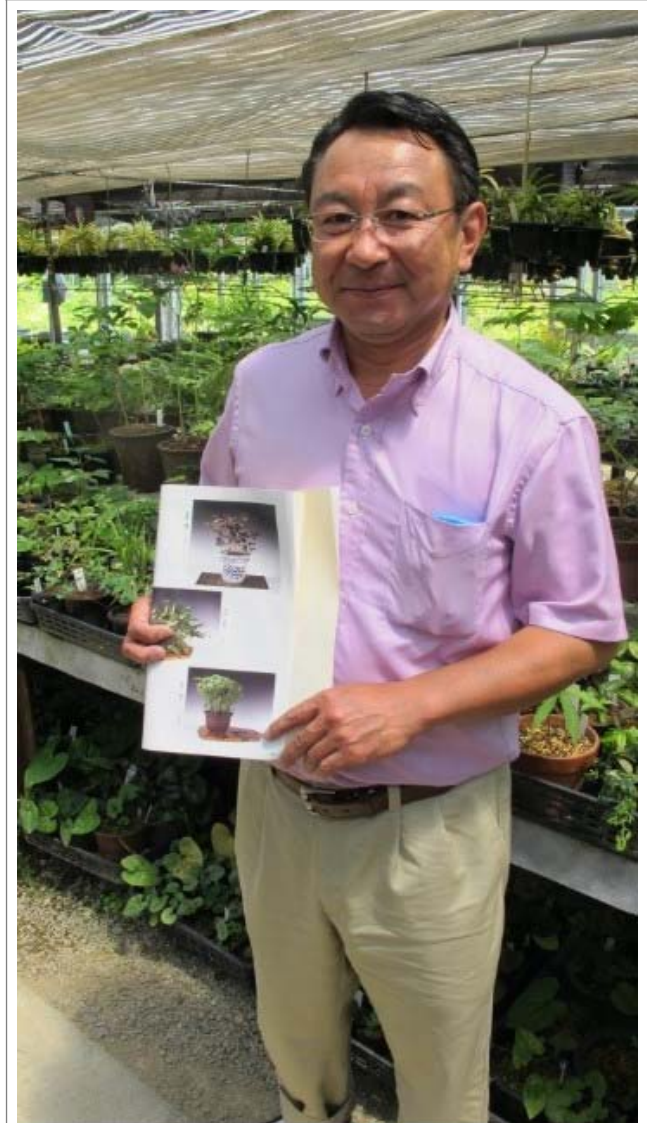


Photo by Verschoor Perennials. Used by permission.

**Selected from a seedling plot of *Astilbe thunbergia*, 'Chocolate Shogun' is the creation of Japanese hybridizer Mr. Nagasaki Teruhisa. When it was introduced, it was the darkest-leaved astilbe yet, and it holds its color well throughout the summer. A breakthrough in astilbe breeding!**

encourage the growth of new leaves. A dose of a liquid fertilizer is recommended in June and again in July.

Newly planted astilbes should be watered weekly for the first growing season. Like all perennials, they will need a little time to get established. You can expect young plants to begin flowering in their second year.

Astilbes are reliable perennials, but they do benefit from being divided every few years. This will regenerate your plant and increase your stock. Divide astilbes in fall after flowering, or in early spring. Pot up the divisions before planting out.



Photo by Tuingoed Foltz. Used by permission.

**With its very dark foliage and contrasting pale pinkish white plumes, 'Chocolate Shogun' will certainly command attention in your shade garden. It is well worth seeking out!**

### Availability

Astilbe 'Chocolate Shogun' is readily available from many nurseries, including Avant Gardens, Bluestone Perennials, Plant Delights, Richardson Roots, Vermont Flower Farm, and others. You may also find this wonderful plant at your local greenhouse. It is well worth seeking out!



Photo by Sue Sirgey Link. Used by permission.

**Astilbes and hostas team up to create a beautiful garden. They both prefer similar growing conditions — humusy, well-drained soil in part to full shade. In the northern states, they will even tolerate full day sun as long as adequate moisture is present.**



## Weeding the Garden: A Never-Ending Task

By *Don Rawson*

Nothing causes more headaches and backaches for gardeners than weeds: those noxious rascals that constantly steal sunlight, water, and nutrients from our garden, leaving things looking unsightly and growing poorly.

Having a weed problem is frustrating and can be a reflection of what people think of us. It is strange to think that something so insignificant as a few weeds can determine a person's opinion of you, but that is a real possibility.

If you develop a weed problem, the best solution is to take immediate action. There are many options to consider like pulling the weeds by hand or applying a chemical weed killer. However, weeding the garden can be very time-consuming, especially if you do not have any room in your schedule.

But weeding the garden should not be ignored! Weeds do not need much to survive. Left unchecked, weeds will continue to grow, expand their root systems and multiply, even invading your lawn — which is why it is essential to keep up on eliminating them from the garden. With consistent weed control and pre-emergent herbicide, your garden will gradually reduce those stubborn weeds and build a resistance to them.

While weeding is a never-ending task, there are some things that you can do to

save time and work in weeding the garden. In this article, we will look at some helpful steps for dealing with weeds. The prudent gardener would be wise to implement as many of these methods as possible.

### Common Lambsquarters, a Tough Weed

There are always many nuisance weeds to purge from the garden, including the infamous dandelion. But according to Michigan State University, one of the absolute toughest to totally eradicate is common lambsquarters. This summer annual emerges in spring, sets seed in late summer, and then dies. So why is it so competitive and persistent?

For starters, the average plant of lambsquarters produces a whopping 72,500 seeds, with a maximum of 176,000 seeds



Photo by Don Rawson

**Common lambsquarters is a troublesome weed due its early-season germination, rapid growth, ability to produce a large number of seeds that persist in the seedbank for many years, and adaptation to a wide range of environmental conditions.**

per plant. (A few studies report up to 500,000 seeds per plant.) That's a whole lot of babies that can result if left to set seed! The seedhead shatters readily at maturity and thus care should be taken when removing mature plants from the garden to prevent seed dispersal.

### One Plant, Many Names

Common lambsquarters (*Chenopodium berlandieri*) is also known as fat hen, lambsquarters goosefoot, white goosefoot, and pigweed. If that is not confusing enough, there are numerous variations — with or without hyphens and apostrophes, using one word or two, and singular or plural. As a rule, the British spelling uses two terms with or without a hyphen, though usually with an apostrophe, while the American spelling uses one word.

Another factor is longevity. After 12 years, 50% of the seeds are still viable. Even after 20 years, one-third of the seed remains capable of germinating to start the whole process over again. It has been projected that it would take 78 years to achieve 99% seed mortality. Plants that have gone to seed and are subsequently pulled and disposed of on the compost pile should be deadheaded first, or otherwise ensure the compost reaches 140°F.

The next characteristic involves dormancy. Mature plants produce two different types of seed with different characteristics. Most of the seeds are black, small, and round, but a small percentage are brown and oblong. The black seeds are dormant at maturity while the brown seeds are non-dormant at maturity. If the soil is tilled and some of the

black seed in buried deeply, it can stay happily dormant for a long period of time, while the brown seed can germinate immediately. On occasion, farmers resort to tilling at night (dark tillage) to reduce seed germination, or to flaming (burning) when plants are at heights of 1/2" or less.

Furthermore, lambsquarters is not fussy about where it grows. It even grows well on compacted soils.

Because lambsquarters emerges early, it must be watched so it does not exceed the maximum height for postemergent weed control. It is one of the first weeds to become difficult to control under dry conditions. Under hot and dry environments, lambsquarters responds by producing a thick epicuticular wax to conserve moisture. This thick wax on the leaves reduces the uptake of foliar herbicides.

As a side note, lambsquarters can be toxic to livestock. If a horse consumes a large amount of lambsquarters, symptoms may include weakness, respiratory distress, coma, and kidney failure. One source states that the oil of this plant is toxic and can be fatal to equines. While it may look like just a common weed, this is one that your horse should avoid. It is best to find and destroy any plants before they do harm.

***“When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.”***

***- Author unknown.***

## Tips for Controlling Weeds in Your Garden

As mentioned above, weeds may cause a number of undesirable issues and will eventually restrict the growth of your favorite garden treasures. If left unchecked, these pesky creatures will compete with other plants for nutrients, space, water and soil, thereby restricting their growth. Here are some helpful tips to prevent and control weeds in your own garden:

1. Once your garden has been weeded in early spring, apply a preemergent herbicide such as Preen Garden Weed Preventer or Snapshot 25TG. These products inhibit the growth of those first roots a seed sends down, preventing weeds before they even have a chance to emerge from the ground.
2. Apply a layer of mulch. Weed seeds have a harder time pushing through mulch, and the mulch blocks sunlight from reaching seeds that are covered by it. With mulch in place, the bad news is that you may still get weeds, but the good news is that those weeds will be easier to remove. After a few years of mulching, weeds will pull up much more readily, even in loam and clay soils.
3. Spray with a broadleaf herbicide (2,4D) such as Ortho Weed B Gon, or with glyphosate, such as Roundup. Keep a sprayer filled at all times.
4. Spray with Bonide Weed Beater Ultra in fall to destroy hard-to-kill weeds. This product works in cooler temperatures than glyphosate, down to 40°F.
5. Kill weeds through soil solarization before you plant. Use black plastic or old carpet.
6. Crowd out weeds with “good” plants. Simply pack your perennials close together, thereby depriving weeds of the bare patches that they so love to exploit.
7. Plant compatible ground covers between your flowers.
8. Be vigilant. Weeds can be sneaky. Stay on top of it!
9. Don’t become discouraged. Break the job up into small areas. Reward yourself.
10. Do fall cleanup to get a jump on spring.
11. Clean your gardening tools when you move from one area to another to avoid spreading weed seeds. Do not leave pulled weeds on the surface. Discard them in the compost bin.
12. Mow your lawn regularly to keep lawn weeds from producing seed.
13. Be careful when buying materials from garden centers. Ask for weed-free mulch, manure, compost, and soil.
14. Water right around your plants. Do not sprinkle your entire garden or you will be watering your weeds.
15. Establish a perimeter. Pay special attention to the area adjoining your flower beds, garden, natural area, or lawn, and establish a weed-free perimeter. Mow or mulch the area, or pull and dig up weeds as they emerge. You’ll help to reduce the number of new weed seeds in the area that you want to protect.

**16.** Weed smarter, not harder. Pay special attention to “perennial weeds” — those that come back year after year and are more difficult to control. You must dig up any roots, underground tubers, and rhizomes without leaving fragments behind. New weeds can grow from the pieces that break off and remain in the soil.

**17.** You can use your hands or, better yet, specialized tools for removing weeds that help to get the plant at the roots and save some wear and tear on your back and knees.

**18.** Use a field guide or an identify-a-plant app to research a specific weed and tailor your control method accordingly.



Photo by Angie Tenney, Michigan State University

**Broadleaf Helleborine** (*Epipactis helleborine*), sometimes referred to as a “weedy orchid,” was intentionally introduced from Europe as an ornamental and is spreading throughout Michigan in lawns, flower beds, and along driveways. Controlling this plant is quite difficult. A single plant produces thousands of seeds and can easily take over the area it inhabits.

**Control Methods:** Typical lawn herbicides like 2,4-D do not work to manage this species. One control method is to dig them up is when they are starting to flower in hopes that their roots and rhizomes are at their weakest. The problem is that you must get all the root system and rhizomes, which is not an easy task. It has short, thin but deep rhizomes and fibrous roots.

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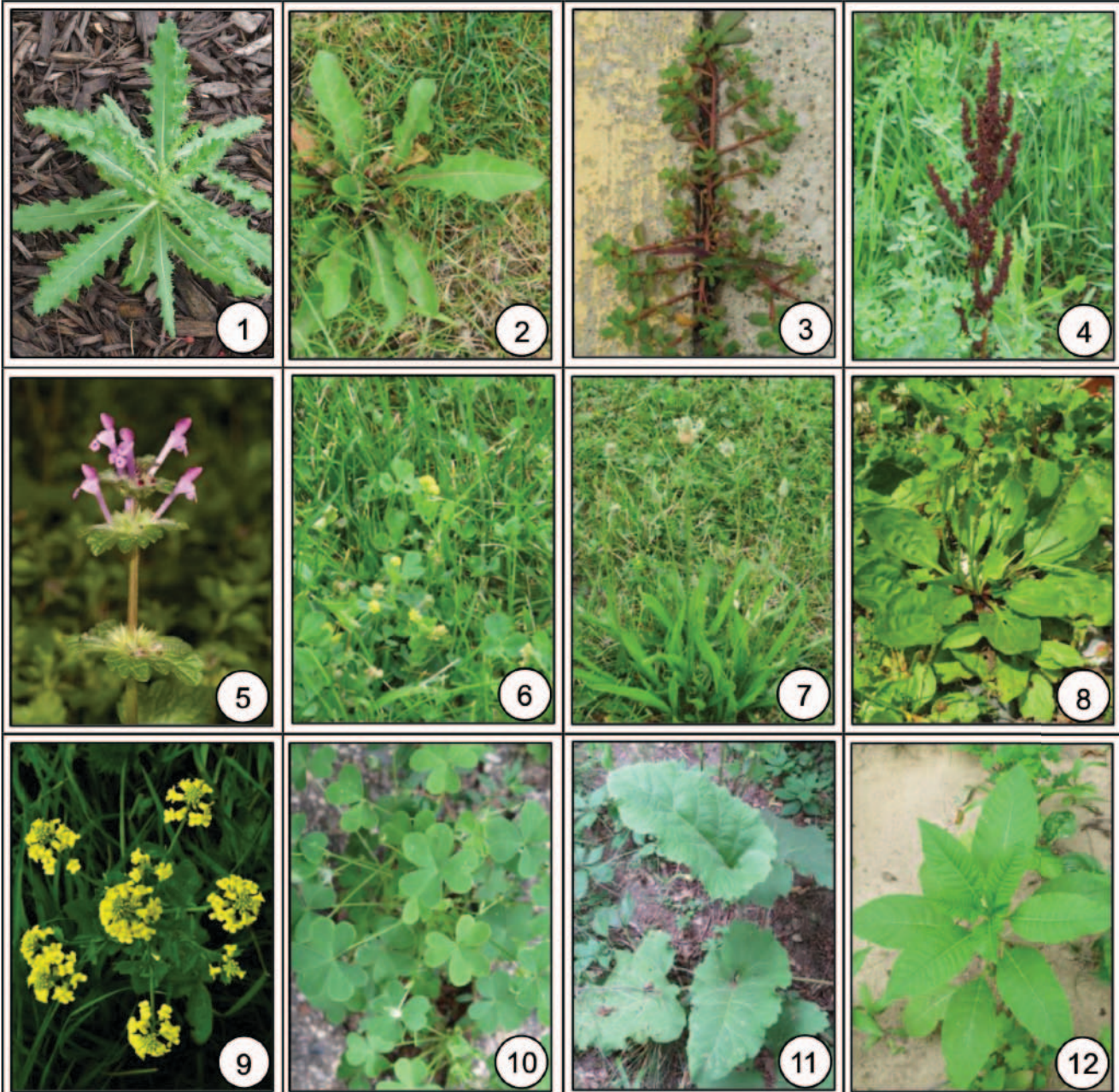


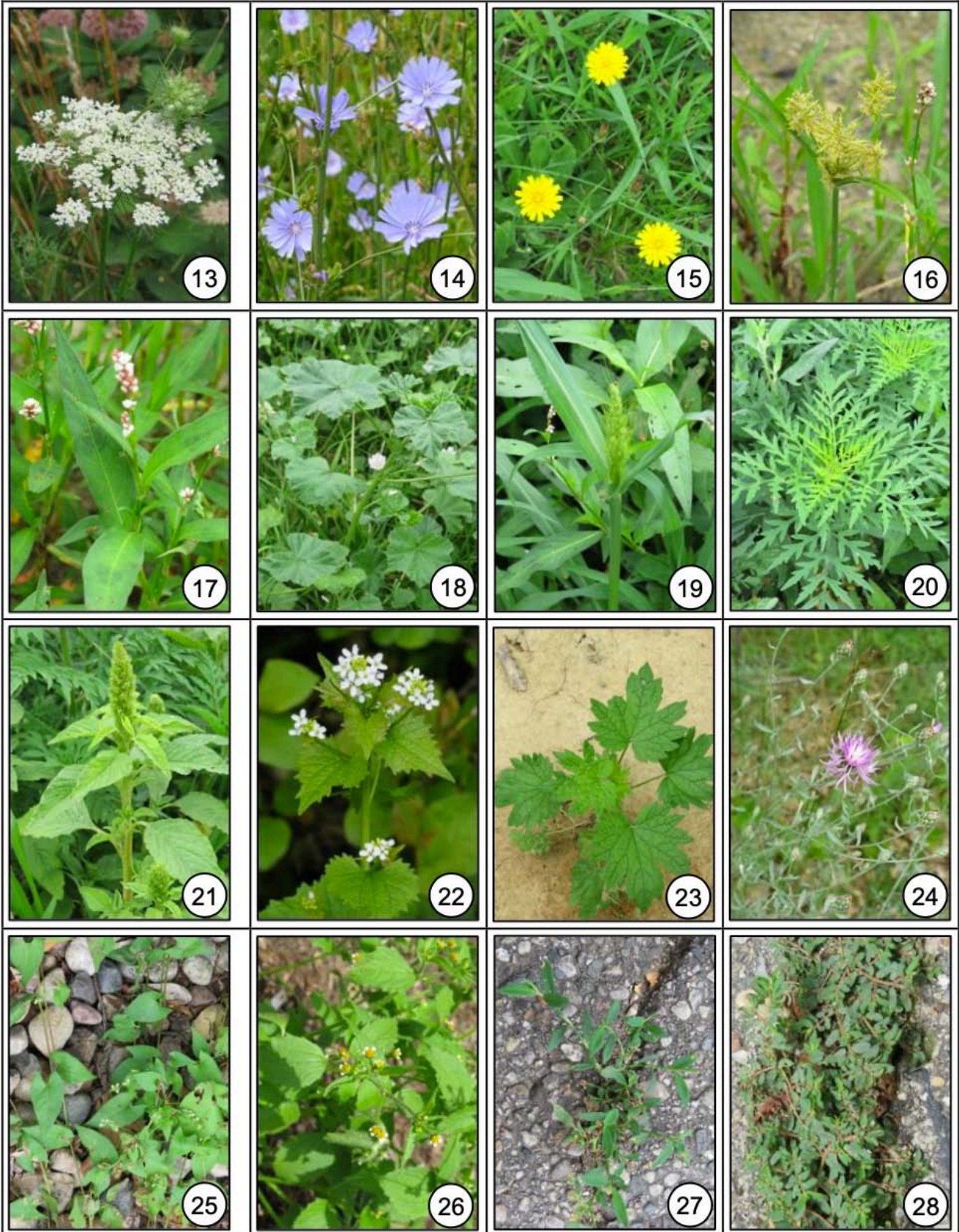
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

# How Well do You Know Your Weeds?

By Don Rawson

Answer Key on Page 16







Photos by Don Rawson

## How Well do You Know Your Weeds?

### Answer Key

1. Field Thistle (*Cirsium discolor*)
2. Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)
3. Common Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*)
4. Curly Dock (*Rumex crispus*)
5. Common Henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*)
6. Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*)
7. Narrowleaf Plantain, Buckhorn Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*)
8. Broadleaf Plantain (*Plantago major*)
9. Wintercress (*Barbarea vulgaris*)
10. Yellow Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis stricta*)
11. Common Burdock (*Arctium minus*)
12. American Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*)
13. Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*)
14. Common Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*)
15. Yellow Hawkweed (*Hieracium pratense*)
16. Nutsedge (*Cyperus rotundus*)
17. Pennsylvania Smartweed (*Polygonum pennsylvanicum*)
18. Common Mallow (*Malva neglecta*)
19. Common Barnyard Grass (*Echinochloa crus-galli*)
20. Common Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*)
21. Redroot Pigweed (*Amaranthus retroflex*)
22. Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)
23. Common Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)
24. Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*)
25. Wild Buckwheat (*Fallopia convolvulus*)
26. Quickweed (*Galinsoga parviflora*)
27. Prostrate Knotweed (*Polygonum aviculare*)
28. Spotted Spurge (*Chamaesyce maculata*)
29. Hairy Bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*)
30. Prickly Lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*)
31. Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*)
32. Lambquarters (*Chenopodium berlandieri*)



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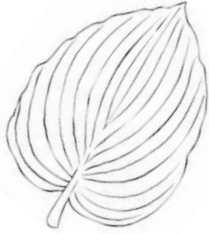
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## *Membership in the Michigan Hosta Society*

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