

MICHIGAN HOSTA HAPPENINGS

Newsletter of the Michigan Hosta Society

MHS 2025 Calendar of Events

By Ed Steinbrecher

New Year, New Calendar

We are creating some great events in 2025. For instance, we are planning workshops (2 or 3 mini discussions on various topics), catered lunches, free hosta plant for each attendee, and more. Make sure you mark your calendars now so you don't miss out.

May 17, Saturday, MHS Spring Workshop, Hidden Lake Gardens

That's right, in May and August we will not have workDAYS on Hosta Hillside, but rather we will host workSHOPS indoors. Instead of starting our events at 9 am. on Hosta Hillside, we will be meeting in the main building at 11 am. Registration for

these events will be required since we are offering a boxed lunch (\$10 when registering for the event). You will also receive a hosta plant and we will have multiple speakers leading discussions. Specifics on these events will be announced in early spring.

June 14, Saturday, MHS Garden Walk, Saginaw area

Yes, you read that correctly — the Garden Walk is back! Don Rawson has helped us with planning a fantastic garden walk through the Saginaw area gardens. You will see some great gardens, plants, and even a couple stops at a greenhouse and a plant nursery to purchase plants. Stops will include: Boehler's Greenhouse, Joe & Carol Goffnett, Lisik Gardens, Rod & Carol Porth. You don't want to miss out on these great gardens. You must register for this free event. Details will be provided via a flyer well before the event date.



June 28, Saturday, MHS Plant Sale, Hidden Lake Gardens

We will have another amazing hosta plant sale on this day. There will be 500 hostas available, with roughly 300 different varieties. This event starts at 9 am sharp when the gates to Hidden Lake Gardens open. Make sure you get here very early. Last year cars were starting to line up at the entrance around 8 am. The scene inside the sales room looked like Walmart on a Black Friday morning. All 500 plants sold in less than ONE HOUR. It amazed us all! This is a great event with some awesome hard-to-find varieties of hostas for \$10 a pot. Don't miss out on this event.

August 24, Sunday, MHS Fall Workshop, Hidden Lake Gardens

For this event in August, we will not have workDAYS on Hosta Hillside, but rather we will host workSHOPS indoors. Instead of starting our events at 9 am on Hosta Hillside, we will be meeting in the main building at 11 am. Registration for these events will be required since we are offering a boxed lunch (\$10 when registering for the event). You will also receive a hosta plant and we will have multiple speakers leading discussions. Specifics on these events will be announced in mid-summer.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at these events. Make sure your memberships are up-to-date. Benefits to the MHS Membership are:

- Registration for the Workshops will be much cheaper for members;
- Members of MHS also get to register a week earlier than the public for Hosta

College, March 21 & 22. Classes fill up quickly;

- Password protected online portal that lets you view and read old and current award-winning newsletters;
- Yearly organized Garden Walk;
- Don't forget you can pay your membership dues **online** now. That is right, twenty first century here we are! Feel free to pay online at [Michigan Hosta Society](http://MichiganHostaSociety.com) and don't forget to give your friends and family this website to join and get some great benefits for themselves.



Unusual Woodlanders for the Shade Garden: *Erythronium*

By Don Rawson

The genus *Erythronium* offers such beauty to the shade garden that I can say it is absolutely one of my favorite spring wildflowers. While single plants can add a lot of charm to a small space, when found in drifts their collective elegance completely captivates me. The flowers themselves are stunning and I cannot help myself from

lifting them for closer inspection. While they all are very attractive, the ones with spotted and mottled leaves are the best and certainly this interesting foliage adds greatly to their overall appearance. I think these woodlanders are simply exquisite — and their mesmerizing elegance will entice you too!

One Plant, Multiple Names

About 20 species of *Erythronium* are found worldwide. Most occur in forests and meadows throughout western North America from California north to British Columbia, while a few are native to eastern

Photo by Saori Cretin. Used by permission.



***Erythronium americana*, known as Adder's Tongue or Trout Lily, is common in woodlands throughout eastern North America from Labrador south to Georgia, west to Mississippi, and north to Minnesota. It emerges in early spring with an erect, nodding stem bearing a single flower that has six yellow, recurved tepals. Unfortunately, this species is not very floriferous.**

North America and Eurasia. As members of the Liliaceae family, the genus is closely related to *Tulipa*, which is most obvious if you turn an *Erythronium* flower straight up. The genus can be divided into two sub-genera, one comprising *Erythronium dens-canis* and the various eastern American species, and the other comprising the western *Erythronium* species native to the Pacific Slope of North America. The botanical name *Erythronium* comes from the Greek *eruthros*, which means “red” and refers to the pink or reddish flowers of some species.

The plant has multiple common names including adder’s tongue, trout lily, fawn lily, glacier lily, and dog-tooth violet. The name **adder’s tongue** is in reference to the shape of the flowering stem as it emerges in spring. Furthermore, the flower resembles the open mouth of a snake. The name **trout lily** is in reference to the mottled leaves that are speckled like a trout, as well as the springtime appearance of the flowers during trout fishing season. The name **fawn lily** refers to the resemblance of the spotted foliage to the coat of a young deer, and the two-leaved plant as it emerges resembles the upright ears of a fawn. The names **glacier lily**, **avalanche lily**, and **snow lily** are appropriate since some species are found at higher elevations near the edge of receding snow banks. The name **dog-tooth violet** indicates the resemblance of the tiny bulb (from which the plant grows) to a dog’s tooth, and its flower somewhat resembles a violet. This name, however, is quite misleading because it is not a member of the violet family. Because of the plethora of common names, I resort to using the genus name *Erythronium*.

Description

This endearing woodland plant blooms in early spring with one to three nodding, bell- or lily-shaped flowers that are borne upon a slender stem sheathed by two glossy, tongue-shaped basal leaves. The flowers range from shades of yellow, cream and white, to pink and mauve. The petals are generally reflexed and the anthers are often yellow to brown, but occasionally bear white or even purple pollen. The leaves of some species and cultivars are mottled or speckled with brown and purple. The stunning foliage, coupled with the delicate flowers, make these plants a spring garden highlight.

Erythroniums typically grow 4 to 12 inches tall. Some species with plain green leaves are found in mountain meadows and thickets, producing flowers in summer and then going dormant in winter.

For an overview of the various species and cultivars, the best resource is an eBook by Ian Young titled *Erythroniums in Cultivation*. The book is posted at <https://www.scribd.com/document/547551112/Erythroniums-in-Cultivation-2016-Ianyoung> and can be printed off for personal use. In addition, an instructional video by Young can be viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/ianyoungerythroniums> for \$15, a modest fee considering the information contained therein. This 1-hour 22-minute presentation takes a wide-ranging look at the genus *Erythronium* in cultivation, covering nearly all the known species as well as some of the garden hybrids. The key features of how to identify the species are illustrated along with the cultivation methods used to grow them in the garden,

including starting *Erythronium* from seed all the way to how they fit in with other plants in a garden setting.

Cultural Requirements

Erythroniums are spring-flowering plants cultivated for their splendid star- or lily-shaped flowers with recurved petals (technically tepals, a term used when the petals and sepals cannot be differentiated). These woodlanders are easy to grow and trouble-free, provided they are given the right conditions. They prefer shade or filtered sunlight, but not deep shade. They will slowly multiply and spread if left undisturbed.

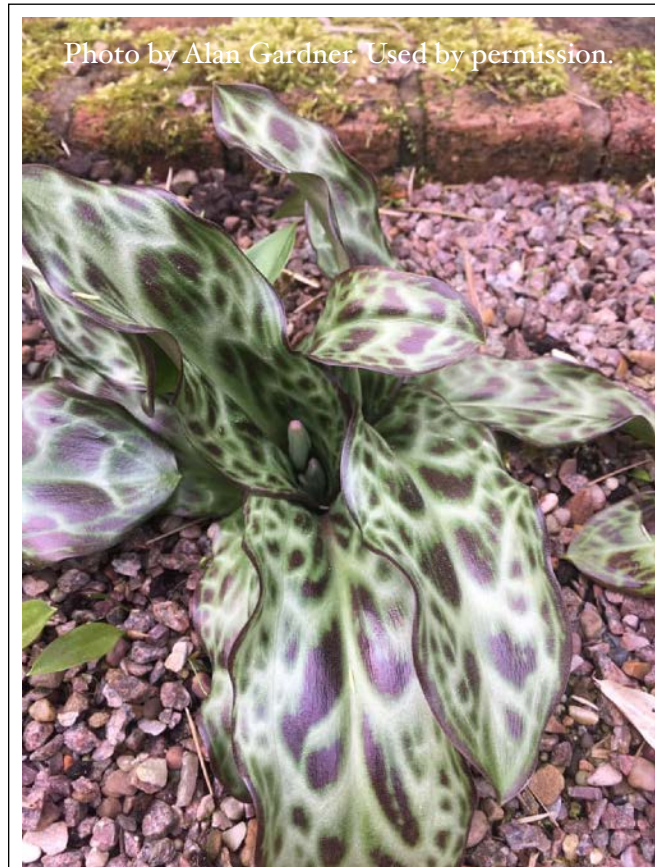
Erythroniums do well in a shady border or under a deciduous tree. They require rich soil, full of organic matter — imagine the dappled shade of an open forest or wooded grassland where fallen leaves and other organic matter are allowed to accumulate. The soil should be evenly moist and slightly acidic. Do not let them dry out — they do best in moist but well-drained soil. Keep the soil

just slightly moist during the dry summer months. Given these conditions, these woodland beauties will be quite happy, blooming each year.

Mulch annually with leaf mold, and do not remove light layers of fallen leaves from the top layer of soil. Erythroniums go dormant from summer onwards, coming back the following year. To avoid disturbing them, mark where they are planted. Over a period of time, they will sink deep into the ground.

As far as propagation goes, bulb division in your garden is possible but not recommended because the bulbs are somewhat delicate. If they are planted in an appropriate environment, they will sow themselves by seed. Or, you can help them along by collecting seeds from their capsules after it has ripened and the flower scape

splits. Collecting and sowing seed every year is the best way to building up numbers. The seed can be sown immediately, or stored in a paper bag and kept in a cool, dry place and then planted in late summer. Soak the



Some species and hybrids are worth growing just for the foliage, including *Erythronium* 'John Brookes' with its lovely marbled leaves.

seeds overnight. Then, press the seeds onto the soil and cover with coarse grit, leaving them outdoors to expose the seeds to the cold and wet of winter. If planted in fall, the seed will germinate in spring and a single cotyledon will emerge. Patience is needed though, as it can take as long as five years until first bloom.



Photo by Gary Smiles. Used by permission.

A star in the garden: *Erythronium dens-canescens* 'Lilac Wonder', a lavender-pink selection of this very easy-to-grow European species with leaves that are spotted purplish brown.

Uses and Planting

Erythroniums combine well with other spring-flowering, shade-loving plants such as hepaticas, bleeding hearts, columbines, twinleaf, and trilliums. They look great in

my own garden where I have them planted among hellebores, ferns, and hostas. They will naturalize in moist soils in shaded areas, and will grow well upon pond or stream banks and in shady areas of rock gardens where their bulbs can stay cool during summer. Erythroniums will gradually multiply and spread over the years if left undisturbed. They can even be used as a ground cover. They look superb when grown en masse, as found in nature.

The bulbs are long, pointed, and cream in color. They should be planted between September and early November for best results. Space the bulbs around 4 to 6 inches apart and plant them about three to four inches deep. If the soil is quite dry, it is a good idea to water them in after planting to settle them. After flowering, allow the leaves and stem to fully die back before removing them, as this is feeding the bulb for the next growing season. Erythroniums are fully hardy and are fine outdoors throughout winter without frost protection.

Erythroniums generally are resistant to deer and rabbits, making them an ideal choice for gardens that typically have such damage.

My Personal Favorites

All *Erythronium* species are very beautiful and garden worthy, but here are some of my favorites:

E. revolutum. This is the only pink species native to western North America where it grows from northern California to British Columbia, occurring in moist coastal forests near shaded streams and in bogs. The flowers of this species are gorgeous, but this

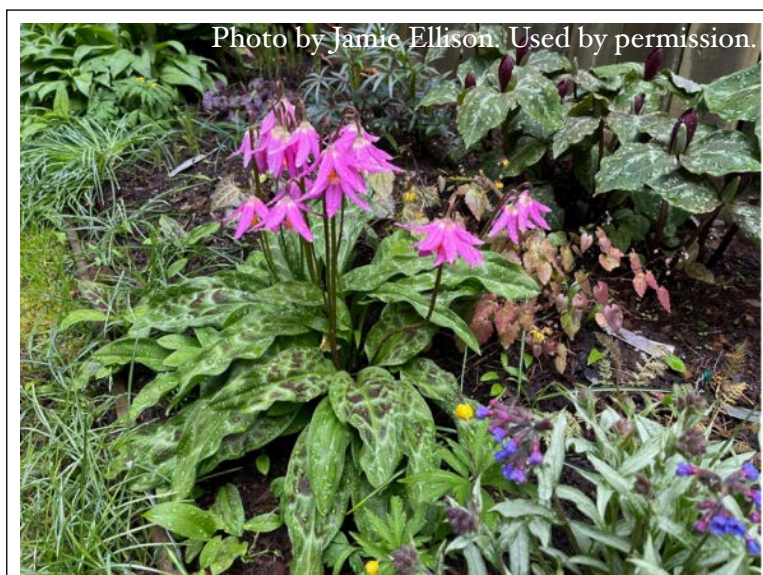
one is worth growing just for the decorative quality of the patterned foliage. It is also one of the best species to seed around, but is not invasive.

E. oregonum. As the name suggests, this species can be found in Oregon and other states of western North America, occurring at low to mid elevations. The flowers, ranging from cream to pure white, have a blush of dark yellow toward the center, sometimes with a dark brown zigzag border. Some forms of this species have beautifully marbled leaves, especially when they first emerge. As with all *Erythroniums*, the contrast of the leaf pattern fades somewhat as the plant ages.

E. hendersonii. The flowers of Henderson's fawn lily have the most appealing combination of colors of all native North American species, with pink to white petals combined with a dark violet center. Like some of the other species, *E. hendersonii* has beautifully patterned leaves that can vary from faint markings to a very dramatic contrast of green and dark brown. Mature plants commonly have three to sometimes five flowers on a single stem.

Availability

- Bluestone Perennials, <https://www.bluestoneperennials.com/>
- Breck's, <https://brecks.com/>
- Brent and Becky's Bulbs, <https://www.brentandbeckysbulbs.com/>
- Far Reaches Farm, <https://www.farreachesfarm.com/>
- Fraser's Thimble Farms, <http://www.thimblefarms.com/>
- Hansen Nursery, <https://hansennursery.com/>
- John Lonsdale (Edgewood Gardens), <https://www.edgewoodgardens.net/>
- K. van Bourgondien, <https://dutchbulbs.com/>
- Keeping It Green Nursery, <https://www.keepingitgreennursery.com/>
- Lithuanian Rare Bulb Garden, <https://lrbgshop.com/lrbg/>
- Phoenix Perennials, <https://www.phoenixperennials.com/>
- White Flower Farm, <https://www.whiteflowerfarm.com/>



Erythronium revolutum 'Alleyne Cook's Best', which sets seeds freely.



- 1.- 'Pagoda'
- 2.- 'Sundisc'
- 3.- 'Joanna'
- 4.- 'Kondo'
- 5.- 'Citronella'
- 6.- 'Rosalind'
- 7.- *E. californicum* 'White Beauty'

Some of the many popular hybrids that are available. All are beautiful!

All photos by Gary Smiles. Used by permission.

Winter Interest in the Garden

By Hans Hansen

As a transplant from Minnesota to Michigan, I have a perspective on winter interest in the garden that I would like to share. Growing up in southwestern Minnesota and later gardening near Waseca, in South Central MN for 15 years, I found that winters were vastly different. The brutal winters near the SD border were punctuated with fierce windchill, dry drifting snow, and blizzards. Tall grass prairie and windbreaks planted were the only vegetation that would slow the wind and drifting snow along the perimeter of farmsteads. One of the most effective plant materials used by southwestern Minnesota locals as a wind break was the Colorado Spruce.

During the winter months in southwestern Minnesota, the only gardening to speak of was reading seed catalogs. Walking through waist-deep snowdrifts while bundled up in snowsuits and insulated long johns to look at plant material was not something anyone wanted to do. Snow could arrive as early as November and stay into March, and there may or may not have been a January thaw. We were an honest USDA zone 4, and -35F was an actual temperature, not a wind chill.

I guess the brutal winters made spring all the more appreciated.

After college I spent 15 years gardening in southern Minnesota near Waseca. The property was a 5 acre parcel of native hardwoods. I carved out a haven for hostas and woodland plants in the wooded area. This remnant forest with its native flora was covered with hundreds of thousands of woodland wildflowers. Spring was all too brief but the most amazing experience I have ever had watching early display of

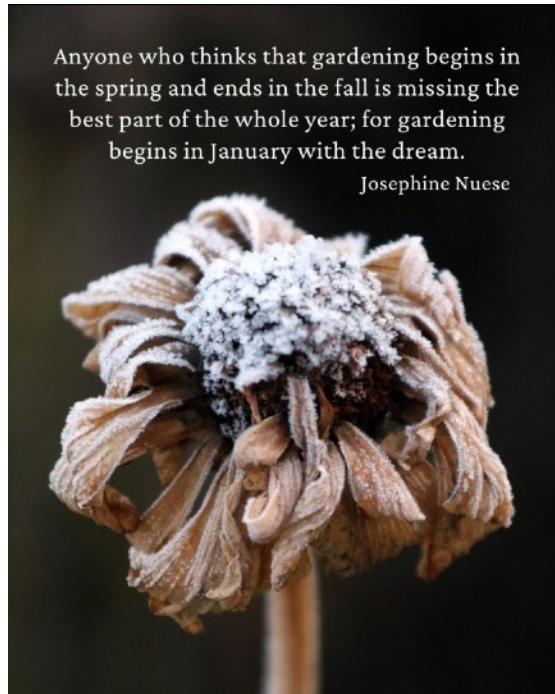
color and texture from plants unfold. I eagerly looked forward to the multitudes of *Hepatica acutiloba*, spring beauties, trout lilies, false rue anemones, and dozens of other spring wildflowers.

In 2009 I moved to Western Michigan where I have since experienced 15 years of Lake Effect Snow (LES) cover common near the western coast of Michigan. Contrary to popular belief, it isn't the feet of snow that falls

along the lakeshore that makes the winters appear longer here, but rather the constant cloud cover from being next to Lake Michigan. The temperatures in MN are definitely colder, but the days are sunny and can be very bright reflecting off the white snow. Here, along the lake, the winter cloud cover moderates the high and low temperatures providing a mild microclimate

Anyone who thinks that gardening begins in the spring and ends in the fall is missing the best part of the whole year; for gardening begins in January with the dream.

Josephine Nuese



that is amazing for plants. That, combined with insulating blankets of snow and well-drained sandy soil allows gardeners to cultivate zone 6 plant material. The lakeshore is home to wide variety of commercial fruit crops like cherries, apples, and blueberries, but gardeners can successfully grow ornamental plants from South America and South Africa. Over my gardening life in Michigan I have grown *Agapanthus*, *Kniphofia*, *Eucomis*, *Delosperma*, *Dierama*, hardy Gladiolas from South Africa, and *Hippeastrum*, *Rhodophiala*, and *Alstromeria* from South America.

I have written about prolonged autumns and the beauty of the changing seasons here in Michigan, and I have learned to enjoy and embrace winter here as well. Compared to the brief autumns of MN, southwest Michigan can have amazing autumns that extend into December. The last three falls

have been long and mild with *Galanthus* and *Narcissus* coming into flower accompanied by the sporadic yet

dependable flowers of the Belerina Primula. I spend as much time as I can puttering around the garden and find jobs like pruning, dividing, and perhaps weeding to capture the beauty of being outside and in

doing so have made the following observations for enhancing the winter garden for winter enjoyment. Five aspects can be used to add interest after the hostas and daylilies have gone into dormancy. They are 1. Structure and Hardscape, 2. Woody Plants, 3. Conifers, 4. Evergreen Perennials, and 5. Seedheads/ herbaceous plant material allowed to overwinter in place.

Hans Hansen's childhood home in Minnesota



Structures or hardscape add a distinctive element of individuality to the garden. They can be as simple as incorporating a few large stones or boulders into the

landscape or a granite fountain. I have a large granite beam that has been hollowed out and is a fountain with cascading water flowing down its sides during the growing season. In the winter it adds a distinct presence to the landscape surrounded by conifers. Along my driveway I have a set of 3 basalt columns that serve the same purpose. I remove the pumps to winterize them, but the stones remain in the garden throughout the year. Statuary, arbors, and pergolas also add interest to the winter garden.

Deciduous woody plants can add a

shade canopy for hostas and woodland shade loving plants or add winter interest of their own. My top favorite is *Stewartia*, *Acer griseum*, *Syringa reticulata*, and *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta'. *Stewartia pseudocamellia*, the Japanese Stewartia, is grown as a small tree for its wonderful white *Camellia*-like flowers that consistently

open over the July 4th weekend here. Native to the mountainous regions of Japan and Korea, *Stewartia pseudocamellia* is a top photo op because of the brilliant reddish-orange fall color. In addition, the smooth bark is another



Picea omorika 'Pendula bruns'



Acer griseum & *Epimedium*



Acer griseum

outstanding feature. As the tree matures the bark produces a patchwork pattern of grays, cinnamon, and brown tones. It is my number one pick as a favorite deciduous tree for the four seasons of interest. *Acer griseum*, the paperbark maple, is another small tree suitable for city landscapes. Native to central China it has smooth cinnamon colored bark that peels away from the trunk in fairly large sheets and remains on the tree. It is the main specimen tree on the Hosta Walk at Walters Gardens and never fails to catch an admiring eye from visitors.

Syringa reticulata, the Japanese tree lilac, is native to Asia. It is a 20'-30' tree. *Syringa reticulata* can also have dark brown peeling bark especially on younger branches. If one is enamored with the lovely fragrance of the common lilac and expect the same from this tree, they will be sorely disappointed. It produces large creamy-

white panicles of flowers up to 12" and bloom after the common lilac has finished, with a strong, unpleasant smell. I remember as a teenager seeing *Syringa reticulata* for the first time planted in the parking lot at the MN Arboretum. Its strong aroma was

detectable from the car. Walking up to the label I wasn't very impressed that a lilac would smell like that. I admire the tree very much in spite of its not so pleasant odorous attributes.

There are several cultivars that have been selected for superior attributes.

Corylus avellana 'Contorta', commonly called Harry Lauder's Walking Stick, is a corkscrew-type of the European filbert. It is a 8'-10' shrub that has a fascinating corkscrew type growth. I enjoy it more in the

winter than any other time of year because of this characteristic. It is next to my mailbox and there is not a day that goes by I don't see it in the landscape. In late fall, persistent catkins appear on mature plants



Corylus





*Chamaecyparis
nootkatensis*
'Green Arrow'

that add interest throughout the winter and spring. I have had at least 1 of these in every garden I've ever had. My first Harry Lauder's Walking Stick was a mail order purchase I planted next to my parents' front door. It evoked either a love or hate emotion. My dad commented "there are actually shrubs that have straight branches that probably cost less money". The cultivars *Corylus avellana* 'Red Majestic' and 'Red Dragon' have foliage that is a dark burgundy red in the spring and early summer. The best way to grow these are from plants grown on their own roots. Grafted plants will sucker from below the graft union and require routine removal of the rootstock.

I have always had a soft spot in my heart for conifers. This group of plants, more so than any other, seems to define my garden

space and add the bones to my corner garden. The dark green recedes and become invisible during the summer when they compete with the colorful blooms of perennials and bright leaf color of variegated shrubs. However, they step into the limelight during the fall color change of the maples and take the starring role in winter. My favorite conifers have architectural and Dr. Seuss like qualities that scream "a gardener lives here!" My top choices are *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* 'Green Arrow', *Picea abies* 'Pendula', *Picea omorika* 'Pendula Bruns', *Pinus strobus* 'Pendula', and *Tsuga* 'Sargentii'.

Chamaecyparis nootkatensis 'Green Arrow', the Weeping Alaskan Cedar, is an extremely pendulous form of the Alaska Cedar. Its branches are held very close to the trunk with random horizontal limbs developing to



Chamaecyparis nootkatensis
'Green Arrow'



Pinus strobus 'Pendula'

add more character. I have a group of 7 clustered together on the corner of my property that adds a permanent statement like living art. A neighbor refers to them as a choir of angels because they sway in the slightest breeze. Maturity of 30' is expected with a width up to 5', although side branches may be pruned for a more ridged linear effect. This is my favorite conifer and I have done a yearly installment of 5 each year at Walters Gardens to add vertical interest to many areas of the landscape. *Picea abies* 'Pendula', the Weeping Norway Spruce, is one of the hardiest conifers available to gardeners (it's a Zone 2! Think North Dakota hardy). Although genetically the same, each plant will have a slightly or dramatically different habit especially when trained young. I have staked mine to 8' in the landscape, a staggered planting of 8 in the south border of my property. I love the very dark green needle-like foliage, the



Pinus strobus 'Pendula'

draping side branches, and the unpredictable character. Unstaked they can be used as a groundcover to cascade and drape down large walls like a living fountain. 'Pendula' sets cones fairly early, and if one were to grow out the seedlings, they would find a nice selection of pendulous forms with varying growth rates.

Picea omorika 'Pendula Brunns', the weeping Serbian Spruce, has a dramatic vertical form like an exclamation mark. If trained young it will have a strongly vertical habit with all of the side branches cascading down, its slender silhouette magnificent in the landscape. I have a trio in the rock garden along my driveway and year-round always attract favorable comments. 'Pendula Brunns' is more formal and has blueish colored needles compared to the weeping Norway spruce. Expect a height of 15' x 3' wide in most gardens.

Pinus strobus 'Pendula' is our native weeping Eastern white pine with its long pinecones. It is a free-form pendulous version of the Native white pine. I love the soft blue needles that beg to be touched and its unpredictable free spirit. Over time 'Pendula' can get to 15' or more in height and width. Its younger years will be spent on the vertical growth followed by horizontal branches. It may be pruned to accentuate the growth characteristics you are after. I have a pair flanking the front door that have framed the windows of the house. I thoroughly enjoy them while looking out of the window toward the garden with the branches framing the view.

Tsuga canadensis 'Sargentii', known commonly as the weeping Canadian Hemlock, is a shade tolerant conifer perfect for the hosta garden. This may either be grown as a



groundcover cascading over rocks and walls or staked to the desired height and allowed to grow as a pendulous tree. I have opted for the later in my garden and have a set of 3 staked to 8'. Their soft dark green foliage cascades to the ground and provides an amazing backdrop for other perennials and spring bulbs.

The soft layer of the shade garden is usually dominated by hostas, the king of the shade perennials, however by combining evergreen perennials with the hostas, one can add up to 6 additional months of interest. My top choices are ferns, *Ophiopogon*, *Carex*, *Cyclamen*, *Heuchera*/*Heucherella*, *Asarum*, *Bergenia*, and *Spiranthes*. Evergreen ferns like *Dryopteris* and *Polystichum* provide such great textural contrast to the bold leaves of hostas but have year-round interest. For me nothing beats the workhorse of *Dryopteris erythrosora* 'Brilliance' with coppery

new fronds in the spring. The leaves mature to a glossy dark green where they remain pristine in the landscape until the following spring.



Epimedium wushanense 'Sandy Claws'



Epimedium

Polystichum acrostichoides, or the Christmas fern, is another indestructible shade plant, once used as the base for Christmas

wreathes, it has a huge distribution over much of eastern North America. It is like running across an old friend when hiking in the woods and seeing it growing in moist shady areas. In the garden this happy clumper stays evergreen until spring. Evergreen Epimediums are another fine, textural perennial to combine with hostas.



Yucca filamentosa 'Color Guard'

In the last 20 years this genus has been revolutionized by the introduction of new Chinese species that have been hybridized to yield some absolutely amazing garden plants both for their interesting flowers and perhaps more importantly for their durable slug- and weather-proof foliage. Some absolute knockouts include the species *E. wushanense* and its selections 'Super Mottle' and 'Sandy Claws'. They tolerate dry shade better than just about any plant I know. About their only care is removing the previous year's foliage so the new spring

growth is more prominent. By carefully selecting varieties a gardener can have specimen plants that clump in the front of the border or groundcover types to plant around the bases of trees or large swaths in difficult shaded areas.

Linear grass-like plants lend contrast to the broad form of hosta. Contrasting with the soft airy feeling of ferns, I like the narrow blades and flowing habits of *Carex*, *Ophiopogon*, and the stark ridged structure of Yuccas. *Carex oshimensis* 'Everillo' is a fantastic gold sedge from Pat Fitzgerald of Ireland. It is great for lining paths and may be used as a specimen next to a rock, or in a stone container. It is a clumper so will not aggressively crowd out choice shade plants. It is a quiet soft yellow for all the growing season but seems to absolutely glow in the winter. Contrast 'Everillo' with *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Niger'. This perennial looks like a grass and has glossy near black leaves that are great for showcasing gold hostas. It is



Heuchera



Panicum & Yucca

most impressive used en masse and its slowly spreading habit forms a weed suppressing groundcover great for balancing the bright yellows and variegated foliage of the hostas.

Yuccas have fascinated me all of my life. It is difficult for a hosta collector not to be drawn to the variegated foliage of *Yucca filamentososa* 'Color Guard', but the blue foliage selections also add incredible value to the garden. Both *Yucca cernua* 'Pole Vaulter' and 'Dragon Slayer' have powdery blue leaves and have a magnificent floral performance. If the yucca moth is present, large showy seedpods follow that will persist through the fall and winter.

Heuchera, *Bergenia*, *Asarum* and *Speirantha* have foliage that mimic the heart-shaped leaves of hostas but have forms that are

evergreen, and in the case of cyclamen, winter foliage persistent. These perennials have value on their own, but when combined with deciduous plants they really showcase their worth. There is seemingly endless array of *Heuchera* and *Heucherella* selections available now, but it is difficult to beat the durability of *Heuchera* 'Caramel' and 'Lemon Love' in the shaded landscape. The contrasting color of the copper tones on 'Caramel' is perfect paired with blue hostas. *Heuchera* 'Lemon Love' is a mellow shade of yellow and also brightens the shaded landscape with or without the presence of blue hostas. *Heucherellas* are often promoted as the flowering hybrids of *Heucheras* and *Tiarellas*, but the cultivar 'Red Rover' is the most amazing autumn specimen with its dark mahogany foliage. Pair it with *Carex oshimensis* 'Everillo' for a lasting combination that looks good all year. I have recently become enamored with the



dark green glossy leaves and flowers of the evergreen Asian Gingers. *Asarum nobilissimum* 'King Kong' almost looks like a plastic version of a hosta. In spring, alien like flowers open under the foliage. If one has an addictive, hoarding personality the genus *Asarum* could be a rabbit hole to spend countless hours admiring and collecting species as well as variants of these attractive long-lived shade plants. *Bergenias* are an old-fashioned perennial that seem to have been

recently resurrected by hybridizers to improve their flower performance. Their hyacinth-like flowers are a lovely attribute in the spring, but the leathery leaves are very persistent and some varieties like 'Winterglow' will take on a gorgeous mahogany red tone in the fall and retain the color and leaves until spring.

Speirantha convallarioides is a plant I wish was in every garden. This clumping perennial from Asia looks like an evergreen hosta.

Bottlebrush like flowers appear in spring. I have grown this quiet and well-behaved plant for over 15 years next to hostas and it has never seeded around or needed dividing. For reasons unknown it seems to be valued by collectors and gardeners seeking the unusual rather than the mainstream gardening crowd.

Cyclamen hederifolium is a European plant valued for its tiny flowers. This relative of the florist's cyclamen is a fantastic woodland plant that is both drought tolerant and critter resistant. The masses of flowers appear in September and persist for weeks into October. Before the flower display is complete, heart-shaped leaves in shades of silver and green in multitudes of patterns and shapes emerge and persist throughout the winter. At maturity a massive corm can produce a clump of foliage rivaling one of the Tiara hostas. In late spring the plants will go dormant and rest just beneath the soil level until the fall emergence of flowers. I have several areas of the shade garden devoted to cyclamen display – nestled in a hosta hillside with smaller hostas, as well as along a shaded border.



Last but not least, for added visual interest to the winter garden, are the herbaceous growth and seed structures of perennials allowed to age gracefully in place. Ornamental grasses might be the first thing to come to mind, but the seed heads of *Astilbe*, upright *Sedum*, *Yucca* stems, and

Agapanthus can really add to the landscape. Most of my interest and work with grasses are our American native sorts, and high on the list are the Panicums and the Schizachyriums. Both are left alone in the fall cleanup and look great throughout the winter in the garden. The sign of a great grass is how it looks in the spring – poor performers flop and get buried under the first snowfall.

My favorite non-native grass aside from *Hakonechloa* would be *Molinia*. This very cold-hardy grass from Europe is virtually invisible most of the growing season until its tall flower stems start to turn yellow in the fall. With names like *Molinia caerulea* 'Skyracer' and

'Transparent' they can be used as a see-through grass in the middle of a border and add winter interest until spring. Tall upright

sedums are another great choice for autumn color, but that is just the beginning.

Sedums are the last perennial I cut back in the spring, and often it's a race against the newly emerging shoots. It's both the height and the form that add so much to the winter garden. The flat umbels catch however little or much snowfall we receive. Again, the litmus test of a good *Sedum* is how it looks after flowering. *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy' is among the best for durability, but new varieties like 'Back in Black' has nearly black leaves with red flowers making great foliage even better.

The seedheads of *Astilbe* and *Agapanthus* are among my favorite seedpods for extended interest.

Echinacea may be the poster child for selfies with a finch feeding off the seeds, but the effect of a clump of *Astilbe* or *Agapanthus* in the garden is hard to beat, both for the

length of time for the seedheads and the longevity of the clump. They seem immune to snow load and weather. I used airy fern-like *Astilbe* en masse to balance the heavy weight of the hostas in my shade garden, and the

Agapanthus are used in abundance in my sunny areas to balance and contrast with the gold foliage of my 'Tiger Eye' sumac, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* 'Ogon' and gold leaf *Origanum* 'Gilt Trip'.



If you use a few of the plants I enjoy to compliment your hostas in your shade garden, you will come to enjoy your hostas as part of the spring and summer show, but not the

entirety of the garden. The more time spent in the garden the more you will see and enjoy the unfolding wonder of nature.

All photos in this article provided by Hans Hansen.

American Hosta Growers Association: 2025 Hosta of the Year

The 2025 American Hosta Growers Association Hosta of the Year is H. 'Skywriter' (NR). This warm, blue hosta has nice ruffled edges sitting atop purple petioles. It forms a vase-like clump and is a good grower. The underside of the leaves are a bright, powdery white. This cultivar was hybridized by Dan Wols from Illinois. The plant is not registered (that is the "NR" in the name) by the American Hosta Society. It is about 17" high and about 46" wide at maturity so give it some room to spread out. Its parentage is 'Marilyn Monroe' for the rippled edge and 'Neptune' x 'Smoke Signals' for the blue coloration. 'Skywriter' was featured in the American Hosta Society Journal 47-2 and is readily available selling between \$20-\$25.



Did you know that the next three AHS National Conventions are all within easy driving distance for Michiganders? Plan to attend! Register online at <https://hostaconvention.org/>.



2025 Peoria, IL • 2026 Columbus, OH • 2027 Indianapolis, IN



Photo by Hans Hansen



ATTEND THE ANNUAL GREAT LAKES REGION HOSTA COLLEGE

32nd Annual Great Lakes Region Hosta College

Friday & Saturday March 21 & 22, 2025

Upper Valley Career Center, 8811 Career Drive, Piqua, OH



H. Age of Gold

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Register for Hosta College: www.hostacollege.org

Visit our Facebook Page: [Great Lakes Hosta College](https://www.facebook.com/GreatLakesHostaCollege) for events & updates

Registration opens for GLR Hosta Society Members: February 8th at 6am

For Non-Hosta Society Members: February 15th at 6 AM

All Registration closes: March 1st at midnight

Registration fees are just \$50. This includes 5 classes, continental breakfast, & lunch

Hotel group rates: <https://hostacollege.org/where-to-stay/>

Friday evening auction, raffle, & vendors are open to the public at 6 PM

Saturday continental breakfast, classes, lunch, silent auction, raffle, and vending.

CLASSES OFFERED

(For Saturday, choose six class periods, including lunch)

THESE ARE THE CLASSES OFFERED IN 2025

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversify Your Landscape • Color and Texture in the Spring Garden All About Hostas • Advanced Hybridizing 2024 Trends and Projects Butterfly Gardening With Host Plants Demonstration of Making Goat Milk Soap • It's Greek to Me • Common Spring Flowers of the Midwest How to Plant a Tree • Birds, Bugs & Botany: Connections to the Natural Realm • Current Topics on Hostas • Pruning Conifers and Deciduous Plants Hybridizing for Seniors • How to Grind Your Own Wheat Berries for Bread Trillium; More than the White One • Giants and Minis • Conifer Cognition (Knowing in the Broader Sense) Attracting Beneficial Insects to Your Garden Introduction to Foraging • Advantages of House Wrens in Your Garden Attracting Uncommon Birds to Your Backyard Garden Myths Debunked • Best Understory Trees • Best Internet Websites for Hostas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midwest Gardening for Butterflies and Moths 50 Ways to Kill a Hosta • Waking Up Your Lawn • Gardening for Wildlife-National Wildlife Certification • Jumping Worm Discussion Kokedama • What Makes a Plant a Proven Winner Welcome Summer Into Your Garden Surviving the Midwest Desert • Where Do Trees Come From? Crevice Gardening in a Trough • Woodland Gardening With Rhododendrons Digging, Dividing and Transplanting Hostas Nighttime Navigators: The Fascinating World of Bats American Hosta Society Judges Clinic I and II Buchart Gardens in the Early Spring • Trends in the Popularity of Hostas over the Years Are Those Bees on My Hosta Flowers • Native Seed Starting Ornamental Grasses • Hiding in Plain Sight: Amazing Nature Camouflage Tall Bearded Iris • Macrame Plant Hanger (Hands On) Pollinator Gardens
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VENDOR INFORMATION

Benedict's Nursery	Esther Benedict	Nappanee, Indiana
Dannaher Nursery	Dave & Leslie Dannaher	Galena, Ohio
Green Hill Farm	Bob Solberg	Franklinton, North

Stone Petal Gardens	Kathleen Zien	Oxford, Ohio
Uniquely Hosta	Andrea Geske	Milton, Wisconsin
Bloom City	Naomi Ormes	Hamilton, Ohio
Marilyn's Hosta Garden & Donald Ruff, Author	Marilyn and Donald Ruff	Marshallville, Ohio

Save the date!

Hosta College

March 21 - 22, 2025
Piqua, Ohio

MHS Plant Sale,

June 28, 2025
Hidden Lake Gardens
Tipton, MI

MHS Spring Workshop

May 17, 2025
Hidden Lake Gardens
Tipton, MI

GLR Tailgate

July 11-12, 2025
Cincinnati, OH

MHS Garden Walk

June 14, 2025
Saginaw, MI

MHS Fall Workshop

August 24, 2025
Hidden Lake Gardens
Tipton, MI

American Hosta Society Convention

June 19-21, 2025
Peoria, IL



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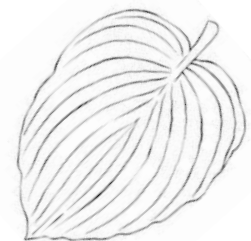
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Membership in the Michigan Hosta Society

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

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:

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

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Mail to:

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2509 Wembly Lane
Troy, MI 48084-1280

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