### **MICHIGAN**

# HOSTA HAPPENINGS



Newsletter of the Michigan Hosta Society

MHS Spring Workshop
at

Hidden Lake Gardens
Saturday, May 17
11:30 am - 3:00 pm

## Only 50 spots are available, so register early!

- Online early registration for members only is \$15 per person, starting April 7 at 7:00 pm and ending April 14.
   Registration will then open April 15 for the general public and the price will increase to \$25 per person.
- Each person who registers online receives their choice of sandwich and dessert choice of cookie or pie from Traverse City Pie Company.
- Each registrant also receives a free

hosta, Hosta 'Emerald Chalice'. This mediumsized hosta



has beautiful shiny, cupped, heartshaped leaves and was hybridized and registered by Charlie Kwick in 2020. While enjoying your lunch we will have a speaker share the great history of Hidden Lake Gardens — how the Hosta Hillside came to be and how it changed throughout

the many years. After a short break, we will walk around the Hosta Hillside and enjoy 3 more speakers who



will give 30-minute talks about how the Hillside will be redesigned in the near term to transform it into a new and better AHS National Display Garden; for instance, by collaborating with other plant societies to fill in areas near the pond and by widening and modifying paths for ease of use for those with mobility issues. We will also discuss ideas for redevelopment of Hosta Hillside that will include amending the old beds so the new and rejuvenated plants will flourish once reintroduced, as well as how to protect our new gardens. You will be able to see some of the great changes that have already started to happen along the pond's shore.

Can't wait to see everyone and share all the great things planned for Hosta Hillside during our Spring Workshop!

By Ed Steinbrecher

### Save the Dates!

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

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 11:30 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 Saginaw Area Garden Walk

Make sure you mark this date on your calendar. We haven't had a Garden Walk event since before COVID. More information will be sent by a separate email flyer when more detailed information will be available.

#### June 19-21 American Hosta Society, Peoria, Il Sold out

#### 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.

#### July 11-12, Friday to Saturday Great Lakes Regional Hosta Society Tailgate, Greater Cincinnati Areas

https://hostacollege.org/2025-great-lakesregional-hosta-society-tailgate/

You must register for this event for a free meal and to see the gardens on tour. Registration ends July 3rd.

- Seven gardens on Friday, from 9-5
- Eleven gardens on Saturday, from 8:30dusk
- The gardens vary in size, style and content
- Hostas galore in some; perennials, annuals, shrubs and trees in others
- About half of the gardens will have one vendor per garden

#### 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 11:30 am.

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. Classes fill up quickly;
- Password protected online portal that lets you view and read old and current awardwinning 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 <u>Michigan Hosta</u> <u>Society</u> and don't forget to give your friends and family this website to join and get some great benefits for themselves.



### "Hostas R Us" Hosta College 2025

By Pam Rawson



'Empress Wu' × OP
A seedling brought to Hosta College
by Don Rawson

Photo by Pam Rawson

You may be wondering, how was Hosta College this year? It was great! A total of 250 people attended. Every spring it is where hostaholics go to meet other hosta loving individuals.

To begin with, the auction Friday night had everyone acting like a kid in a candy store. The variety of auction items was amazing and the cost for a hosta was very reasonable. Thus, the term "Hostas R Us." I even consider myself a lover of all things related to hostas.

Our journey to Hosta College actually began last September. It was then that my husband Don and I decided which classes we would

teach. I chose to go with a class on tall bearded irises that I taught two years ago. My husband Don decided to teach a basic hosta course for beginners. For a second class, he decided to teach a class on the best internet websites for the hosta gardener. He also decided to teach a very practical class on how to dig and divide hostas. No, do not cut your hostas apart with a knife, as we were told in the 1980s when there were only two varieties available.

The schedule for Hosta College is the same each year. Friday night is busy with vendors and the auction. Saturday morning starts with donuts, followed by classes. This year, my first hour class was Birds, Bugs and Botany, taught by Judy Semroc. My secondhour class was on Giants and Minis, by Josh Roggenbuck, in which I received a sneak peek behind the scenes at Walters Gardens. Third hour was lunch, which was long enough to eat and then check out my favorite vendors. My fourth hour session was about Jumping Worms, taught by Lisa Quiggle. I learned that these nuisance pests are becoming a real problem for hosta growers everywhere. My fifth hour was Six Gardening Myths Debunked, by Mary Albrecht. For my sixth-hour, I taught a class on tall bearded irises. I had 26 hosta-loving people wanting to learn about sun-loving irises. I was amazed.

Is there something you are passionate about? Could you talk about it for 45 minutes? Would other people be interested in hearing it? Then consider teaching at Hosta College. This event offers a variety of courses. If you know about bugs, teach a class. If you traveled to Europe last year, teach a class. If you make birdhouses, teach a class. The benefits of being a teacher are

numerous. You can attend Hosta College for free. The banquet on Saturday evening is paid for. There is also a small stipend for each class you teach. This helps with gas and your hotel room.

For years, my husband and I have brought door prizes to Hosta College. I thank my employer, Roeda Studio, who made it possible for me to bring artwork that I hand painted to give out to some lucky winners in each of our four classrooms. Thanks also to Hans Hansen of Walters Gardens. For the past five years or more, Hans has filled up our trunk with plants to donate to those who attend Hosta College. Everyone who wins always enjoys one of his special plants, me included. Thank you, Hans!



Plants from Hans Hansen at Walters Gardens

Photo by Pam Rawson

Hosta College is a great experience. Friends near and far gather to do what hosta-lovers do... visit and talk about hostas. Join us next year. "Hostas R Us!"

### Heavy-Duty Digging Fork — A Favorite Garden Tool

By Don Rawson

Gardeners like you and me are an aging demographic. It's true! And, as seniors, we undergo some psychological changes. We become less willing to accept change, even when it comes to how we manage our gardening duties. Furthermore, we become more possessive of the things we have collected throughout life. For me, that includes both my treasured plants as well as my favorite gardening tools.

One of the important garden tools that I value the most is the digging fork from W. W. Manufacturing. The founder of this family-owned company, Walter Lesche,

immigrated from Germany to the United States in 1952 where he worked in the welding and machine shop of the world's first frozen food processing plant. While working there, he began establishing himself in the local agricultural/horticultural community as an innovative problem solver. This reputation followed him when he began his own business, Walt's Welding, out of his garage in the mid-1950s. It was here and in future years, working closely together with growers, that many of his later innovations and inventions took root.

#### W. W. Manufacturing Company Established

In 1964, Walt's Welding moved to its current location and later became known as the W. W. Manufacturing Company, Inc. In the late 1970s, Walter began development of a spade with a replaceable blade and non-breakable, all-steel handle, which he later patented.



Photo by W. W. Manufacturing Co.

In 1952, Walter Lesche came to the U.S. penniless, unfamiliar with the English language, but through hard work and ingenuity he created and sustained an ever-growing business that contributes to American know-how for individuals in the gardening and landscaping profession.

Walter's reputation grew as an innovative agricultural and horticultural problem solver. His entrepreneurial spirit began when he opened Walt's Welding in his garage in the mid-1950s.

Since his death in 2002, his family has taken up the mantle to continue the standards of excellence that Walter established during his lifetime.

The spade was marketed with the slogan, "Replace the blade, not the spade." It was unique in that it came with an unconditional five-year guarantee against breakage. The production of this spade led to the development of other spades and shovels, in what came to be known as the "The King of Spades" product line.

In addition to spades, the complete product line at W. W. Manufacturing has grown to almost one hundred different items such as shovels, rakes, nursery carts, custom tracking trailers, and other tools for the horticultural and landscape industries. There is also a specialty line of digging tools for the hobbyist. In effect, W. W. Mfg. Co. today is a perfect example of the traditional American immigrant legend: Walter Lesche came to the USA penniless, unfamiliar with the English language, but through hard work and ingenuity, he created and sustained an ever-growing business that



W. W. Manufacturing Company, Bridgeton, New Jersey.

The digging fork by W. W. Mfg. Co. is very durable — virtually indestructible. I have used it for nearly twenty years and depend upon it immensely. It is my "go to" for digging and transplanting hostas. I recommend it to anyone who will be gardening and landscaping for years to come. Unquestionably, it is well worth the investment.



contributes to American know-how for the gardening and landscaping profession.

#### Heavy-Duty Digging Fork — Indispensable Tool for Diehard Gardeners

The digging fork from W. W. Mfg. is undoubtably the best garden fork on the market! The tines are constructed of high-quality steel for great strength. The all-steel handle is indestructible. Believe me, I know! I have been using the W. W. digging fork for years and I am not easy on tools. The handle is unbendable and unbreakable. While the head is forged in Austria, the remaining components are made and assembled in America at the plant's factory in Bridgeton, NJ.

Prior to my discovery of the W. W. digging fork, I collected quite an array of broken garden forks (aka "junk") that just did not stand the test of time. I won't mention any brand names (I've tried them all), but most had wood or fiberglass handles. The times bent easily and broke off. The sturdy steel handle and forged head of the W. W. digging fork are far superior, unless you are digging in an area with underground electrical wires!

#### Using a Fork to Dig and Transplant Hostas

Small and medium hostas are fairly easy to dig and transplant, but it is the giants that can cause backaches as well as some headaches. While the humongous ones are the most impressive, they also are a real bear to move because of their size and extensive root systems. Over a period of years, large hostas can become 8 ft. or

more in diameter. That is a lot of real estate! And the amount of soil that can be attached once they are lifted from the ground can be substantial. That is why the right tool for the job is essential.



Photo by Garrett Wade. Used by permission.

The digging fork by W. W. Mfg. is available from various mail order retailers including Garrett Wade, <a href="https://garrettwade.com/">https://garrettwade.com/</a>.

Many gardeners attempt to use a shovel for this task, unaware that unlike most other plants, hosta roots that are severed on the end during the digging and transplanting process are unable to heal, branch out, and continue to grow. While the portion of the root that is connected to the crown may remain alive, it will never increase again in length. In the unfortunate event that you spade closely around a hosta in your own landscape, lift it this summer to see what you have. The severed roots will have brown tips, with no branching or new



Photo by Phyllis Rogers. Used by permission.

You may have heard that the way to divide a hosta is to cut it apart with a knife, somewhat like slicing a cake. While a hosta with an injured root system will likely survive, it certainly will set the plant back significantly. The damaged remnant must send out new roots from the crown in order for the plant to remain alive and continue to grow. Roots that were severed on the end cannot grow in length or branch out, which limits the plant's ability to draw up nutrients and water. It really is no different than voles chewing off the roots of your hosta, as shown in the photo at the left.

growth. That puts a lot of stress on the plant.

A heavy-duty digging fork is suitable for the job. Better still are two garden forks, working together side by side. Two forks have twice the lifting strength (if you can operate them simultaneously). Now, let's be honest. If you're like me, you've probably spent a fortune on hostas over the years. So, why not be nice to your plants by giving them the best of care, particularly when digging and transplanting. The rewards will pay off. They will recover much faster when undergoing this process. Then your plants will be happy, and happy plants make for happy gardeners. Happy digging!



If you dig and divide hostas with a shovel, you are sure to sever some of the roots.

### **Memories of Spring**

By Hans Hansen

Some of my earliest and fondest memories of spring are from my early childhood days.

We would walk on the hardened snowbanks formed by months of drifting snow and intermittent freeze-thaw cycles. If conditions were right, one could walk on the drifts without sinking through, and kids hardly left a trace of their footprints. We would cut stems from an old Pussy Willow shrub at the north edge of the vegetable garden to force indoors. Some years we would harvest about all of the stems from the plant. We loved to share bundles with friends after a long hard winter. As far as quality of the stems, the longest nonbranched stems would be from one year growth so the annual stem harvest was a benefit to the plant.





After the snow retreated, I eagerly scouted the garden for signs of life. One of the earliest plants to flower were the *Crocus vernus* 'Pickwick'. I remember picking flowers from the clump and taking them to my kindergarten teacher Mrs. Schmaltz. I still grow this variety to this day, planted inches from the brick foundation of the west side of my house. The protection and warmth of the house encouraged early flowering.



There were few undisturbed parcels near the family homestead that had not been converted from original American tallgrass

prairie to the agricultural production of corn and soybeans. My uncle and cousins lived on my father's grandparent's home that had a hillside sloping down to a creek and had been used for pasture and never plowed. My dad took me there to hunt for pasqueflowers (*Pulsatilla patens*) one



spring. The furry little stems nestled among the previous year's growth of grasses were a happy moment to find. They held a cup shaped flower of

lavender blooms. The final early spring flowers we had on the farm were the tulips planted on the south side of the farmhouse. I still remember coming home from school after a long bus ride and impatiently wondering what color they would be. Curiosity got the best of me and I teased open the buds to see the interior petal color and black base of the flowers.

My appreciation of native woodland plants originated in a college class called Minnesota Wildflowers at the University of Minnesota. It was taught by Marian Fischer of Waseca. Her energetic personality and enthusiasm for the spring ephemerals native to the woods of southern Minnesota was contagious and her classes were nearly all taught in an outdoor laboratory environment. The class spanning an entire

semester, chronicled the life cycle and progression for the plants from March through May. It was fascinating to observe the week-to-week changes in the woods. More often than not we would see a plant in flower one week and the following week it would have finished its bloom cycle. Marian knew all the good parks and woods that were undisturbed where we could study the plants.

After college, as fate would have it, I purchased a 5-acre property. The portion with a split-level house was built in the 1970s and was subdivided from a 13-acre parcel east of Waseca, MN on a windy road called The Snake Trail. Located between two marshy lakes, the virgin woods were comprised of a mix of basswood, green ash, red oak, black walnut, hickory, hackberry, and at one point in time American elm which was used as the trim inside the house. More impressively, the hardwood forest had sandy loam soil and was absolutely covered in millions of spring ephemerals. There was nothing that could ever come close to the spectacular spring progression of northern wildflowers coming into bloom beginning with the Hepatica acutiloba, bloodroot, and spring beauty



crescendoing to the white trout lily (Erythronium albidum), Dutchman's Breeches (Dicentra cucullaria), Phlox divaricata, and finishing with the Jack-in-the-pulpits (Arisaema triphyllum), Nodding trillium (Trillium cernuum), False rue-anemone (Isopyrum biternatum), Asarum canadensis, and Uvularia grandiflora. I spent countless hours botanizing the woods making selections of superior color forms and patterns of the hepaticas and other native woodland natives.



In addition to the native woodland plants, I began to grow other early spring bulbs and perennials. Most of these excelled in the sandy woodland soil. *Galanthus nivalus*, the common snowdrop, was among the earliest to flower, along with winter aconite. The form I received was a gift from Mildred Seaver. During the next 15 gardening seasons I went on to supplement the native flora with an assortment of plants from North America and abroad. Some of my favorite North American additions from botanical expeditions and friends were the double forms of *Anemonella thalictroides* 

(the rue-anemone). 'Shoaf's Double', 'Cameo', and 'Betty Blake' are among the choicest cultivars of the spring anemone wildflowers. Rather than the single forms with 5 petals, these are multi-petaled with tiny chrysanthemum-like flowers. Sanguinaria canadensis 'Multiplex' is the completely double form of the native bloodroot. These look like small white waterlilies and unlike the single flowered forms whose flowers last a day or two in a sudden spring warmup, the double form lasts noticeably longer. In the mid-1990s I ordered a semi-double pink form from Diana Reeck at Collector's Nursery on the west coast. This charming bloodroot had pink sepals and white interiors with extra petals. It was passed around by myself and others under the named pink form until Joe Pye Weed Nursery assigned the name 'Venus' to it.



In my humble opinion, the queen of the American native wildflowers is the double form of the showy trillium, *Trillium grandiflorum* 'Snowbunting'. The flower starts out pure white and then picks up pink tones as it ages. I have found this clone to be durable and moderately fast to increase. In the 30 years I have grown it, I have divided it several times and spread it around to form a nice colony. I anxiously await its

return every spring. There are other clones of double trillium with varying forms and petals – 'Mackinaw Queen' and 'Rickshaw

Double' are others, but this one (also called 'Multiplex' or 'Smiths Double') is the most common form seen in specialty nurseries. The sharp leaf hepatica (Hepatica acutiloba), was abundant in my woods, and I selected color variants with darker violet flowers and picotees, flowers with soft pink of lavender petals with

darker margins. The only named variety I

am aware of is H

'Louise
Koehler', a
double lavender
form named
after Louise
Koehler, a
wildflower
enthusiast from
Bixby,
Minnesota.
Occasionally
offered (my
first one was
from Mike
Hager of

**Ambergate** 

Gardens), it well worth growing. The fully double flowers appear later than the single forms and persist longer.

During this time in my life there was an Asian pipeline to Japanese flora via Barry Yinger of Asiatica Nursery in Pennsylvania. Some of the choicest Asian wildflowers came from him including *Jeffersonia dubia*,

the Asian Twinleaf. This

lavender flowered cupshaped flower seems more polished and elegant than the American counterpart, Jeffersonia diphylla. I grow and love them both, as well as their foliage; clumps of leaves comprised a pair of semi-circle leaves look great all season. The interesting seed pod is a shaped like a tobacco pipe and is under the foliage. In my opinion, Glaucidium

> palmatum is the choice of Asian wildflowers. This native of Japan has single lavender flowers comprised of 4 crepe paper-like petals. The peonylike clumps bloom at the same time as Rhododendron 'PJM' if one wants spectacular color echoes in their shade garden. A white form,

Glaucidium 'Album' is also available. These can be grown from seed but require 3 to 4 years to reach flowering size, worth the wait because of the cost and rarity of flowering size plants. Barry Yinger offered 2 woodland





peonies, Paeonia japonica and Paeonia obovata. These are truly peonies that grow in and require shade. Paeonia japonica flowers at the same time as Phlox divaricata and makes an excellent paring. The peony will slowly form a clump over time,

Cypripedium 'Ulla Silkens'

growing to about 18-24" tall and having delicate creamy white goblet-like flowers with yellow anthers. Its flowering season is brief but the seed pods that form persist for many weeks in the fall. The pods will open when ripe and are a shiny lacquer red on

the inside. The ripe seeds are a glossy near-black in color if viable, but seeds without an embryo will be a red color. Paeonia obovata is similar but slightly taller and blooms 2 to 3 weeks later and has a smaller mauvy-pink colored flower.

Cypripedium Gisela

It was around

1997 when I caught the *Cypripedium* bug as a few of my friends in the Minneapolis area of Minnesota had large clumps of *Cypripedium parviflorum*, the yellow lady slipper. Penny Aguirre shared a division of her form, originally receive from Joan

Cooper of Cooper Iris Garden. This fast offsetting, quick-to-clump form was compact with large yellow pouches. This was the gateway lady slipper orchid that opened my eyes to the world of Cypripediums. It was about the same time that Paul Christian of

Rare Plants in England offered me named hybrids. For the next several years I ordered named varieties that were offspring of crosses germinated on media after pollination and raised to flowering size before being offered as a grex (sister

> seedlings from the same cross). Some of my favorites were 'Gisela', 'Philipp', 'Sabine' and 'Ulla Silkens'. They thrived in an area of the woods with moist sandy, humusy soil and high canopy shade. he artificially produced hybrids had incredible vigor and made interesting shade

companions to ferns and miniature hostas. Because the area I grew them in was consistently moist, *Primula japonica* reseeded and naturalized with great abandon there. I can't remember what strain I began with, but they certainly were

a NARGS (North American Rock Garden Society) acquisition and were in shades of white, soft pink, and rich carmine. Of all the things I miss the most from that garden it is the ability to grow the Cyps like nowhere else. My current garden lacks the moist shade that suited them so well.



In 2009, I was transplanted to western Michigan, and I downsized from 5 wooded acres to a fairly open quarter acre city lot. I moved the choicest of my favorites over the next year, but logistically an 11-hour drive, full time job, and apartment life, the first year made it a very short list. The *Glaucidium*, double trillium, and woodland

peonies made the trip, but the rest of the Minnesota native wildflowers were left to live on in my memory, except for the dormant hitchhikers that followed every hosta.





A new garden, a new life, and a new hardiness zone gave me the opportunity to try new things. One of the housewarming gifts was a collection of species Narcissus from the late Bob Stewart of Arrowhead Alpines. Four species that stood out were N.

rupicola, N. bulbocodium, N. cantabricus foliosus, and N. cyclamineus. I value them because of their diminutive size and their earliness to flower. Some years, Narcissus cantabricus foliosus will flower in December. The grass-like foliage that disappears unobtrusively after flowering is unlike the large show bench-types that turn yellow and look unsightly in late spring and

early summer
when the rest of
the garden is
pristine and
fresh. Narcissus
cyclamineus has a
charm all its own
with tiny yellow
trumpets and
reflexed petals
that point straight
back. Its hybrids
also have the

same charm and there are many selections of various sizes and color patterns that have similar flower forms. Another charming hybrid and one of the first to flower is *Narcissus* 'Little Gem'. Last year it flowered on March 1st. In the 15 years I have gardened in Michigan I have collected miniature and dwarf daffodils much like I had with hostas in Minnesota. I've joined the American Daffodil Society and began a breeding program for miniature daffodils. There is room for more miniature daffodils with pink and red trumpets.

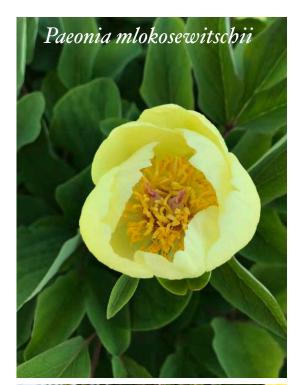
I have also embraced Galanthus with the same fervor. The first named variety came from Tony Avent, a very large flowered form called 'Beth Chatto'. One thing led to another and in February of 2020 I found myself just a stone's throw away from Stonehenge while attending the "Galanthus Gala". They are good for early spring. Last year they came into flower on February 22. Although there isn't a Galanthus society per se, there is certainly a devoted following that has annual weekend meetings both in England and in Pennsylvania, as well as membership on Facebook. These Galanthophiles are incredibly discerning and appreciate the subtle differences in flower size, single or double form, interior green markings, green or yellow marking on the back of the sepals, dimples in the petals etc. Perhaps sounding strange to folks with only a passing interest in spring bulbs, it truly is a fascinating genus and new species are still being studied and named. Modern day horticulture has changed with the popularity of social media and a particular Galanthus photographed by tourists on vacation turned out to be a new species to science. I also have increased my snowdrop collection by admiring pictures of Galanthus







posted on Facebook and then tracking down a source. Galanthus do make nice companions for hostas as they extend the season of interest in the garden and kindly disappear when finished blooming. They can also tolerate moist conditions when dormant, unlike some other spring bulbs that would rot. Some of my favorite selections include 'Godfrey Owen' having 6 petals, 'Fly Fishing' having an exaggerated pedicle from which the flower hangs from, 'Diggory' having very puckered petals, and 'Trumps' having a lovely green pattern on the back of the leaf. Folks with deep pockets can appreciate rare forms being auctioned and fetching impressive amounts of money much like the Hosta 'Dorothy Benedict' did during the 1990s hosta craze.





My enthusiasm for species peonies has never waned, and a separate article could be written about my love of them. In addition to the woodland peonies from Asiatica that accompanied my move, I grow the yellow *P. mlokosewitschii* 

and P. wendelboi. Folks probably are familiar with "Molly the Witch" (Paeonia daurica subsp. mlokosewitschii) the legendary yellow species peony, but P. wendelboi is newer to science and cultivation. Named fairly recently to honor Professor Wendelbo who discovered the peony, this dwarf peony from North Eastern Iran has intense yellow to gold flowers and glaucous leathery bluegreen foliage. It has been proven hardy to the Midwest (Iowa, USDA zone 5) and should be grown if given the opportunity. Seeds are occasionally available from seed exchanges. Paeonia villosa is another charming peony for the rock garden with intensely pubescent emerging foliage. Unlike the large flowered double P. lactiflora, bred for the cut flower trade, the species peonies have strong stems, generally distinct foliage and attractive seedpods. I would encourage everyone to grow a few of these as

there is certainly a place in your garden for some.

The *Primula* that really thrives in my Michigan garden is the Belarina Series from the Kerleys in Cambridge, England. These



Iris cristata is a native woodland iris that makes a fantastic groundcover for shade. In spring, when the trillium are blooming, light blue flowers cover the spreading clumps. These grow 4-6" tall so are great for planting along shaded paths or in the front of the shade border. Rock Knoll Nurseries once carried Iris lacustris in its mail order catalog and I grew it in Minnesota. Known as the dwarf lake iris, it is native to the Wisconsin side of the lakeshore of Lake Michigan resembling a

dark violet form of *Iris cristata*, but it is more compact. Sadly, I left it behind and I wish I had brought it with me.

fully double vulgaristypes are developed for the container market in Europe. Designed for seasonal color for early spring they remarkably are even better garden plants here. Fifteenyear-old plants have formed massive clumps and just get better and more impressive with time. The color range includes whites, reds,

pinks, yellows, and blues. Because they flower with the daffodils, one can create impressive color echoes and contrasts with the violet and blue shades of the *Primulas* like 'Violetta' and 'Watercolour Blue'. 'Buttercup' is a wonderful yellow *Primula* that combines well with daffodils, as is 'Nectarine', which has an orange rim that flushes over the petals with age.

When we think of iris, it is generally the tall bearded iris that come to mind, but





Last but not least are the hellebores.

Minnesota was on the cusp of the northern range where the *hybridus*-types would thrive. *H. niger* was a zone hardier, and although I grew the *hybridus*-types for most of my gardening years there, they did not perform as well as they do here in Michigan. *Helleborus niger* and the pink flowered hybrids 'Rosemary' and 'Madame Lemonnier' are among the earliest perennials to bloom in my garden. Unlike



the *hybridus*-types, these have larger flowers, face sideways, and are usually more compact. The *hybridus*-types have a wide range of colors from white to near black and all shades of pink, red, and yellows. Modern hybrids can be spotted or patterned and come in single flowered, anemone types, and double. Hellebores are both deer and rabbit resistant, resistant to frost, and tolerate summer drought much better than hostas and primulas.

Enough from me, time to get out in the garden.

























All photos in this article provided by Hans Hansen.



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Hosta Hillside

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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 <b>either</b> black and white newsletter via First Class US Mail or full color newletter via email. 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