

MICHIGAN HOSTA HAPPENINGS

Newsletter of the Michigan Hosta Society



Hostamania *Hosta College, 2026*

By Pam Rawson, Comstock Park, MI

Over 200 hosta enthusiasts signed up for the Great Lakes Region Hosta College in Piqua, Ohio. We met at the Upper Valley Career Center. This school was ideal for various classes, vending, and cafeteria. After attending for over five years, I finally know my way around and can automatically tell you where the number 400 classrooms are located. I still haven't figured out why there is a room 221 and 221 A, but I know where to find them.

The activities start Friday night with an auction. Hostas big and small are set up to sell. Some go for \$10.00 while others go for over \$200.00. This year, there seemed to be more vendors with everything from hostas, to garden décor, to trees and succulents. We always look forward to seeing our good friends, Uniquely Hostas and Bob Solberg. According to Uniquely Hostas, the hot selling hosta this year was Don Rawson's own *H. 'Sparky's Dazzler'*. The little plants were stunning.



H. 'Sparky's Dazzler'

Photo by Don Rawson

The business Uniquely Hostas from Wisconsin thought they ran out of *H. 'Kettle Moraine'* (B & J Geske 2022). However, there were more stored in their trailer. This corrugated green hosta has huge leaves. According to Andrea Geske, one leaf was 18" x 11". Very impressive to all hosta lovers.

Saturday was filled with classes and lunch. After classes, there was a two-hour break where you could drive to town. We always hang out in the parking lot of Home Depot to rest before the Saturday evening festivities. There are several places you can go just to shop around.



H. 'Kettle Moraine'

Photo by Andrea Geske, used with permission.

One of the benefits of Hosta College is connecting with old friends and making new friends. We make sure to talk to those we know from Ohio, Indiana, and of course, Michigan. This year, I made a new friend who helped me with my class "Painting with Pam." Here I am hiding in the far-left corner sharing a painting project with her.



Photo by Andrea Geske, used with permission.

To those hosta lovers near and far... Hosta College is the place to find other hosta enthusiasts. In fact, I guarantee you will meet someone who...

1. has more hostas than you;
2. knows more about hostas than you;
3. knows something about hostas;
4. knows nothing about hostas;
5. knows where to find that elusive hosta you have been looking for.

If you did not make it this year, please join us next year. The hosta lovers will be there. That includes me!



Pam Rawson and Maybelle Tafoya, taken by Pam Rawson.

Know Your Enemy: The Vole

By Don Rawson

“I have lost huge beds of hostas. I have lost 100s of dollars worth of hostas to voles. I have declared war, whatever it takes!”

“I’ve been digging up many of mine for the same reason and seeing little left of the roots. Frustrating, to say the least.”

“Voles! I hate them!!! Lost many of my hostas over the winter.”

“Vole victim here. Wiped out about a dozen established 15-year-old hostas. Milder winter

here. Never experienced vole damage before. Maddening.”

These true-life declarations represent the utmost contempt that many gardeners have toward the vole. While slugs and deer are significant menaces for all gardeners, it is the vole that is viewed with such disdain. Once a family of voles moves in, your garden plants can disappear in short order, and it is downright sickening to see your most highly-prized gems destroyed overnight.

Voles Eat a Lot

Voles have a remarkably large appetite for their size, eating a significant portion of their body weight daily (often 70% to 100% or more) to fuel their high metabolism, and causing



Photo by Diane Duggins Wagner. Used by permission.

Diane Wagner of DeMotte, IN, experienced this extensive vole damage to one of her prized hosta specimens. It is downright sickening to see how much they can destroy in just one summer. Nothing but a handful of loose pieces remain, and those lack any substantial root system. It is time to take decisive action!

significant damage to gardens, crops, and trees, especially in winter when they create extensive tunnel systems. They are voracious herbivores, preferring grasses, roots, and bulbs, but will also eat bark, seeds, fruits, and even insects or other small animals when food is scarce.

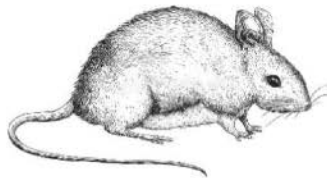
Voles love to eat fleshy roots (like hostas!), often tunneling underneath and consuming them until the plant dies or can be easily pulled out, leaving damage such as wilting or leaves that are suddenly laying on the ground. Their tunnels and holes are key signs of their presence. They destroy hostas by eating the roots, causing the plant to fail from the bottom up, often before the gardener is even aware of it.

Voles are often mistaken for mice, but they differ significantly. Mice are highly

opportunistic omnivores, meaning they eat both plants and animals, but they consume only 10-15% of their body weight daily. Voles, on the other hand, are primarily vegetarians, focusing heavily on plants like grasses, roots, seeds, and bulbs. They have a stocky body, with a high metabolic rate relative to many other rodents and vertebrates of a similar size.

Voles do not hibernate; they remain active all year, foraging for food and living in burrows under the snow, where they continue eating bark and roots when green plants are scarce. They may even breed in winter if the conditions are mild. They survive winter by staying underground in tunnels, using snow cover for insulation, sometimes huddling together for warmth.

Mouse



vs.

Vole



Large ears, long tail	Stout, short body with a short tail
Light brown to dark gray	Dark brown or blackish
Omnivore	Herbivore
Indoors or outdoors	Primarily lives outdoors
Signs of an infestation include droppings, chewed wires and furniture, scratching sounds.	Signs of an infestation include damaged vegetation, surface runways, and burrows.
A frequent nibbler, eating small amounts throughout the day, consuming 10-15% of its body weight daily.	A huge appetite, often consuming often 70% to 100% or more of its body weight daily.

Voles are Prolific Breeders

This is not what the hosta gardener wants to hear, but here it goes: voles are extremely prolific breeders. These small rodents are known for rapid population growth due to short gestation periods, frequent litters (often 5-10 per year), and early sexual maturity, allowing a single female to produce dozens of offspring

Voles are extremely widespread, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere's temperate regions. With over 155 species, they are found throughout North America, Europe, and Asia, inhabiting meadows, fields, and forests with dense ground cover. Michigan is home to at least three species: the eastern meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), the woodland vole



Meadow Vole



Woodland Vole



Prairie Vole

Michigan's native vole species.

annually, leading to quick population booms, especially in mild weather. They have 3-8 babies per litter, with up to 10 litters per year.

Furthermore, young voles mature incredibly fast, reaching sexual maturity in as little as 3 to 6 weeks after birth, allowing them to start breeding quickly and produce numerous additional litters, leading to a very rapid population growth. Another reason why voles are a gardener's worst nightmare!

Voles are Widespread

If you have not encountered a vole problem in your own garden, consider yourself lucky, as they could someday move in. They are quite common throughout North America.

(*Microtus pinetorum*), and the prairie vole (*Microtus ochrogaster*), with the meadow vole being the most widespread. The meadow vole is found not only in Michigan, but from Alaska and northern Canada, south to Georgia, New Mexico, Utah, and even into parts of Mexico. As a side note, a meadow vole's territory can be as much as 38,000 sq. feet (0.8 acre), so a single member can inhabit a large area of your garden during its lifespan!

Recognizing Vole Activity

Have you ever noticed a hosta shrink from one year to the next? Or, have you had a hosta completely disappear? If you push on the ground where the plant used to be, you will notice that the ground caves in because the roots

are completely gone. Other telltale signs of vole activity are shallow runways and tunnels in your gardens, or even holes at the base of your hosta clumps. These pesky rodents can damage or even kill a hosta by feeding on its roots. In addition, voles can gnaw the bark at the base of trees and shrubs, and they are notorious for eating flower bulbs, especially favorites like tulips and crocuses. Unlike some rodents, voles do not hibernate and need food all winter, with bulbs being a prime, high-energy source.

If you have detected vole activity in your landscape, it is time to fight back. Turn your frustration into action! If left uncontrolled, voles could destroy the beautiful and lush retreat you have worked so hard to create. There are various ways to mitigate the issue.

Prevention is the Best Medicine

Like many things in life, it is much easier, cheaper, and more effective to stop a problem from happening in the first place than to treat it after it occurs, and that is true when it comes to avoiding a vole infestation.

As an avid gardener, your first course of action is to reduce food and cover. Voles are attracted to areas with ample vegetation for food and abundant cover. Rather than encouraging voles to live in your yard, take steps to remove these elements to help drive them out naturally. Keep your lawn mown regularly. Remove any unnecessary ground cover like leaves, brush, and low-lying shrubs. Clean up any birdseed that may have fallen to the ground, as well as berries, nuts, etc. Tilling the soil, where possible, will keep them from making tunnels.

In late fall, clean your beds and do not apply more mulch than necessary, as they will use over-mulched beds as cover during winter. The key is to remove any hiding or dwelling conditions that would be suitable for voles.

Identify Areas of Vole Activity

It is likely that the voles in your neighboring area are concentrated to certain areas in your landscape. By identifying the vole damage on your property, you can better pinpoint where the voles are living and where to focus your attention.

Common signs of vole damage include surface runways, burrow entrances (round holes about 1.5" in diameter), and gnaw marks at the bottom of trees. If your hostas seem to be stunted or are failing to grow, voles may be the culprits. Dig one or two up and inspect the root system. Hostas that have experienced vole damage will have short, stubby roots that have turned brown on the ends.

The amount of vole damage in your yard will indicate how large your vole population is. Keep this in mind when determining the best control method.

Once you've located your voles and know the scale of your problem, use the information below to choose a control method. Chances are, you have more than one or two voles if you observe any damage at all, and the more control methods you employ at a time, the better your chances are at getting rid of them.



Photo by Joyce Weir. Used by permission.

“That’s what this guy is for, and the moles and voles have decreased a lot. Also, I plant most my hostas in wire baskets from Dollar Tree.”

Joyce Weir

Repel Voles

Castor oil is widely used as a natural repellent for both moles and voles, creating an unpleasant smell and taste in the soil that disrupts their feeding and makes the area unappealing. It is often mixed with dish soap and water, and then applied to lawns and gardens to make food sources undesirable and deter burrowing. It may need reapplication after rain.

Ground moles dig tunnels, looking for grubs and worms. While moles are insectivores and do not eat roots, voles may occupy those tunnels that were first formed by moles, and they are the ones which feed upon roots. Therefore, by ridding the lawn and garden of ground moles, you eliminate molehills, preserve earthworms (which are beneficial), and prevent the formation of tunnels that can be hijacked by

voles. The application of castor oil as well as grub control products will be useful to deter both moles and voles.

Ultrasonic Repellers

An ultrasonic repeller works by emitting high-frequency sound waves that are designed to annoy and disrupt pests like rodents and other animals, theoretically causing them to flee the area. These devices plug into 100V outlets and project ultrasonic sounds, but scientific evidence suggests they are largely ineffective for sustained pest control, as pests often adapt to the noise. Many homeowners complain they do not work and are ineffective for repelling voles.

Live Traps

Perhaps the most humane method to rid your yard of voles is by using live traps. These small

rodents can be captured and manually removed from your property. This method is suitable for smaller vole populations, but will not make much of an impact on large infestations.

For best results, set out multiple traps to capture as many voles as possible. Position the traps directly on top of the surface runways that you've identified in your lawn or garden to catch them as they travel back and forth. Peanut butter is a popular and effective bait. Monitor

Castor Oil for Moles and Voles

Home remedy: Mix one gallon of water, one cup of castor oil, and four ounces of dish detergent. Water all areas thoroughly where you want to deter the moles and voles. Apply the solution in the fall after a few frosts and after you have cleaned debris from the beds, but before the ground freezes. Because voles tend to cause the most damage during winter, you do not need to spray year-round unless you have a major issue. Note: Do not use unscented castor oil.

Homemade Ground Mole Repellent with Dawn Dish Soap and Castor Oil,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woSDS5tmIoA>

Getting rid of MOLES the organic way!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0_eQE71F7c

Castor oil granules: These granules are applied to the ground and activated by water, which helps the castor oil penetrate the soil to deter burrowing pests. Easy to apply, the granules can be spread by hand or with a spreader. Generally non-toxic and safe for use around children, pets, grass, and plants. Castor oil granules can be purchased at the big box stores as well as on Amazon.com.

Bonide MoleMax Mole & Vole Repellent Granules (10% castor oil)
Mole Scram Professional (17% castor oil)

Castor oil liquid:

Bonide MoleMax Mole & Vole Repellent (100% castor oil)

Sweeney's Mole & Gopher Repellent (100% castor oil)

Castor oil is also available in 5-gallon buckets.



your traps frequently so you can release the voles in a timely manner.

Exclusion

Another method to avoid vole damage is to install physical barriers to keep voles out of your yard or gardens. This is only effective if the proper materials and specifications are used in the construction of your barrier. Mesh fencing should have openings 1/4" or smaller and should enclose the entire area. For voles, barriers should extend at least 12" above the ground (or snow depth) and buried at least 10-12" into the ground to avoid burrowing underneath. While voles are generally poor climbers, they can jump over barriers up to 9" high.

Cats

Cats have natural hunting instincts for rodents and can control small populations or deter them, but their effectiveness varies greatly. Many indoor cats are poor hunters, while outdoor or feral cats tend to be better mousers.

The best dog breeds for mousing are primarily terriers (like Jack Russell, Rat Terrier, Cairn, and Yorkshire) due to their strong prey drive, tenacity, and size.

Mouse Traps

A mouse trap baited with a peanut or peanut butter will help to reduce the vole population in your garden. Locate traps in a vole runway or at the base of a damaged hosta. Place something over the trap that has openings for the vermin to travel through, and this will keep other animals

from being caught. Additionally, voles generally prefer dark, sheltered environments.

If you find a hole that has been made by a vole, place the baited trap next to the hole and then put a black bucket over it. Weigh down the bucket with a stone, if necessary, so that it does not get knocked or blown over.

Planting in Wire Baskets

Planting hostas in wire cages or baskets is another option, but it has pros and cons. The roots will inevitably become entangled in the basket as the plant continues to grow. Lifting the basket out and cutting it apart to work the roots free is quite a chore.

Wire baskets that are used as waste containers are too small for large hostas.

Furthermore, roots that have expanded beyond the basket are susceptible to vole damage, thus affecting the health of the hosta. Some gardeners manage to make larger cages using wire mesh, but are left with scrapes and torn clothes. It is also quite time-consuming to do so. If you do attempt it, make sure to overlap the mesh a few inches, as it will tend to separate and expand as the hosta grows. Another word of advice: some gardeners have made their own baskets, thinking they were an acceptable size — only to later discover that they were not!

However, some gardeners have reported good success in preventing voles from eating the roots with this method. They insist upon planting all their hostas in baskets or a container of some type. One note of caution: if you use a bucket or pot, it should have drainage holes in

Roots that have expanded beyond the basket (*right*) are susceptible to vole damage. Some gardeners manage to make larger cages using wire mesh, but are left with scrapes and torn clothes. It is also quite time-consuming to do so.

The baskets usually found in stores are too small for large hostas. One solution is to use two or three to reconstruct a single, large basket.

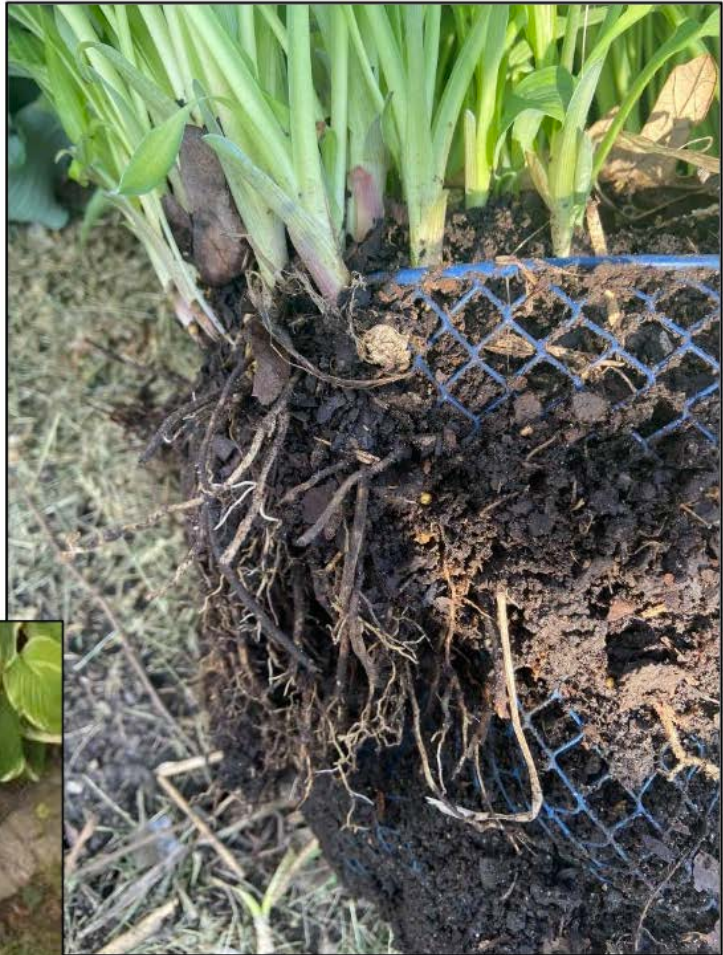


Photo by Traci Lennon Settlitz. Used by permission.



Photo by Deb Clemens. Used by permission.

the bottom, and make sure the container is made of something that voles cannot chew through.

Wire baskets are effective in preventing vole damage on two fronts: first, they are a barrier that keeps burrowing rodents away from the roots and crown, and second, they are an obstacle above ground that discourages these tiny creatures from entering. Voles are primarily surface travelers. They will dig down once they have found a food source, but usually just tunnel along until they run into a rock or tree trunk. In

our case, as they scurry along they bump their little noses against the wire cage or basket and then move on, rather than stopping to consume the precious plants that we truly enjoy.

When using a basket, ensure that 2" extends above the soil level, keeping in mind that some settling generally occurs when planting a hosta. The final objective is to have a barrier high enough so that voles will be more prone to go around it than to climb it. One final tip: mulching the garden year after year will cause

the rim to be buried deeper and deeper, allowing the voles to go over it. To avoid this problem, leave 4" or more above the soil and squash the rim down to the soil line. As the soil line rises outside the basket, pull the rim up a little more each year. And, carefully inspect all baskets

Sharp Gravel to Discourage Digging

Sharp gravel deters voles because its jagged, hard edges make it uncomfortable and difficult for them to tunnel through, disrupting their preference for soft soil. Wise gardeners mix it into planting holes to discourage vole activity.



Wire baskets are very affordable at Dollar Tree, but are also available from Walmart, Amazon, etc. To ensure a vole cannot squeeze through, make sure the holes are smaller than 1.5" in diameter. Baskets can be spray-painted to disguise them in the landscape and to improve durability.

periodically. It is easy to accidentally step on one, and that makes easy access for these nuisance pests.

It truly works! When voles travel along the open ground and reach an obstacle, their instinct is to go down for safety, not up and over the obstacle where they could be caught. They hit the rim of the basket and find an easier path around, leaving the hosta inside alone. Planting in baskets is well worth the effort.

Bigger Hostas Require Bigger Baskets

Some hostas reach an enormous size, and larger specimens require larger baskets. For the largest hostas, take two or three baskets, cut the bottom out, and then cut one side open and zip tie them together.

Baskets can be spray-painted green or black, both to camouflage them from garden guests as well as to extend their lifespan.

This physical obstacle impedes their movement and feeding, discouraging voles from damaging roots and bulbs.

To deter voles with gravel, use sharp, jagged materials such as crushed granite (available from a landscape supply or gravel pit), chicken grit (available from a farm supply), expanded slate (Permatill VoleBloc), or crushed oyster shells, mixed into the soil or used as a barrier around plants. Their uneven edges make tunneling difficult, unlike smooth pea gravel which is less effective. Mix the gravel into the soil while planting the hosta, or create a 12" deep by 3" wide moat around vulnerable plants for a physical deterrent.

PermaTill VoleBloc, a product manufactured by Stalite Environmental, is an expanded slate soil amendment. This lightweight, porous, and durable material is sometimes used in gardening

and landscaping to create permanent air pockets in compacted soils, improve drainage and aeration, and to aid in root development. Made from heated slate, it helps plants access water, oxygen, and nutrients, while also serving as a physical barrier to deter burrowing rodents like voles. Go to <https://staliteenvironmental.com/vole-control-1> to learn more.

Whether using sharp, crushed stone or PermaTill Volebloc, the key is to create a solid continuous barrier between the roots and the voles.

Other Methods

VoleX

VoleX, manufactured by Ecoclear Products in Sarasota, FL, is a non-toxic solution to killing voles. The company's mission is to produce effective products that are safe for people, pets, livestock, and wildlife.

This attractant bait targets their digestive system, causing dehydration and lethargy in voles without harming pets or livestock when used as directed. It can be used both indoors and outdoors. See <https://ecoclearproducts.com/collections/volex>

VoleX can be purchased on Amazon.com.



Photos by Stalite Environmental.

PermaTill VoleBloc, manufactured by Stalite Environmental, is not a repellent or bait. It is a physical barrier system that protects bulbs and roots without restricting growth. This barrier dramatically reduces vole damage while adding permanent aeration, improved drainage, and nutrient holding capacity to soils.



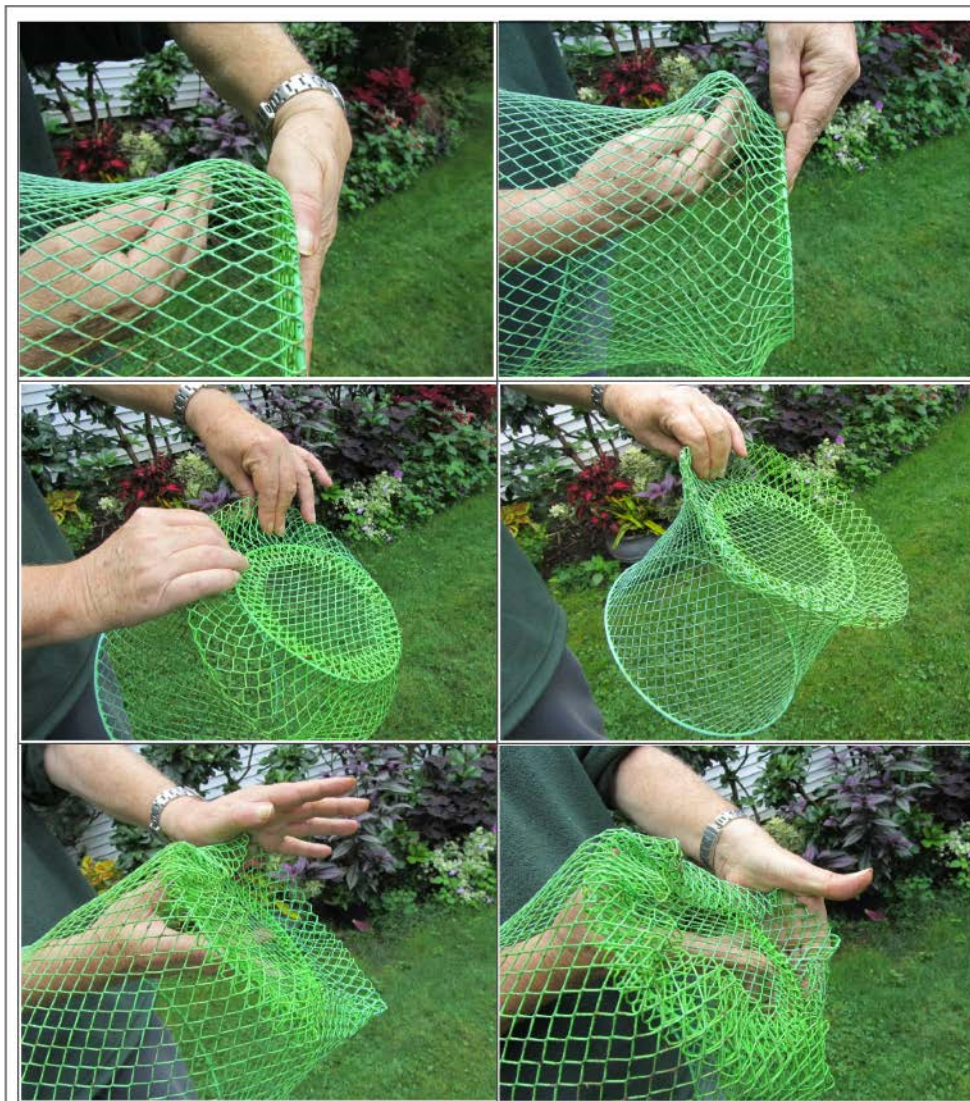
The bait station on the left is designed for Tomcat bait blocks, whereas the vertical bait station on the right is for pellets. Both offer a safer way to apply rodenticide by protecting children, pets, and non-target animals from accidental exposure while targeting rodents that enter to eat the bait and carry the poison back to their nests.

Vole Bait and Bait Stations

Various poisonous baits designed for rats, mice, and voles are available at big box stores, farm suppliers, and on Amazon.com. These products are designed either as bait blocks or pellets. One agricultural rodenticide designed specifically for voles is Rozol, which is sold in a 50# bag. Rozol is commonly used in orchards, nurseries,

and in tree and forestry plantations. This commercial product generally is not for the average homeowner.

Bait stations can be combined with the deployment of other methods, e.g., wire baskets, sharp gravel, repellents, etc. While some individuals may protest that toxic baits end up killing the predators that pick them up as



Photos by Carol Brashear. Used with permission.

Wire baskets can be shortened so the holes do not need to be dug so deep! Start by pushing out the sides along the bottom. Then fold over the bulged-out sections to shorten the basket. That gives you sufficient planting space and enough basket to leave an inch or above ground.

snacks, it should be noted that not all bait has secondary toxicity. The most important caution when using these products is to adhere to the label instructions to minimize the dangers to children, pets, and non-target wildlife through both direct ingestion and secondary exposure.

For Further Reading

What's With All the Baskets?

[https://www.hostalibrary.org/articles/Baskets.htm?](https://www.hostalibrary.org/articles/Baskets.htm?fbclid=IwY2xjawPQyZ1leHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFRdU1LZEJIazZvZ2hRclhwc3J0YwZh cHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5Mg ABHsfpnU6AxCXek90rVGKS1x8XRy_MzcK ZuAvNW_ewBOqb_-1Z0YcedmLmEF4G_aem_RsQaogAKEoT1xaeC8wPuNA)
[fbclid=IwY2xjawPQyZ1leHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFRdU1LZEJIazZvZ2hRclhwc3J0YwZh cHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5Mg ABHsfpnU6AxCXek90rVGKS1x8XRy_MzcK ZuAvNW_ewBOqb_-1Z0YcedmLmEF4G_aem_RsQaogAKEoT1xaeC8wPuNA](https://www.hostalibrary.org/articles/Baskets.htm?fbclid=IwY2xjawPQyZ1leHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFRdU1LZEJIazZvZ2hRclhwc3J0YwZh cHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5Mg ABHsfpnU6AxCXek90rVGKS1x8XRy_MzcK ZuAvNW_ewBOqb_-1Z0YcedmLmEF4G_aem_RsQaogAKEoT1xaeC8wPuNA)

8 Effective Methods to Get Rid of Voles,

<https://www.gardenia.net/pest/voles>

Controlling Vole Damage,

<https://extensionpubs.unl.edu/publication/g887/2011/html/view>



Photo courtesy of University of California Integrative Pest Management

Amazing Facts About Voles

Super Breeders: They can have multiple litters (up to 10) per year, with babies born hairless and quickly maturing to reproduce themselves.

Year-Round Activity: Voles are active day and night and do not hibernate, even digging tunnels through snow in winter.

Master Tunnelers: They construct complex burrow systems and surface “highways” for quick travel, often visible in lawns.

High Metabolism: They eat their body weight in food daily, consuming grasses, roots, seeds, bark, and hostas — making them significant garden pests.

Surprisingly Empathetic: Some studies show they comfort each other when distressed, displaying empathy usually seen in more complex animals.

Ecological Role: Their burrowing aerates soil and disperses nutrients, but their feeding habits can kill plants by girdling stems or eating roots.

Not Mice: Though often called meadow or field mice, they are actually related to lemmings, with stubby tails and stocky bodies.

Vole Congestion: The highest recorded vole population density is 2,000 voles per acre.

Good Swimmers: Many vole species are skilled swimmers. In fact, the European water vole can swim up to 50 ft. underwater.

One Partner: Some vole species are monogamous, while others are not.

Largest Vole: The largest vole is the Water Vole, which can reach up to 9” in length.

Lifespan: Voles typically live 3 to 6 months in the wild, though some can live up to a year.

Photo credits: Meadow vole, Chuck Holmer. Woodland vole, Army Corps of Engineers. Prairie vole, Nastacia Goodwin. All photos used by permission.

Going for the gold

by **Hans Hansen**

Gold leaf hostas can brighten the shade garden unlike few other perennials. I

love gold hostas, and they have come a long way since the introduction of *Hosta* 'August Moon', *H.* 'Golden Medallion', *H.* 'Sum and Substance' and *H.* 'Golden Scepter'. The gold leaf hostas of today come in a variety of leaf shapes and sizes, have good vigor, and clarity of color. Some of the early yellow leaf hostas were tissue culture mutations that sported when yellow margined or medio-variegated hostas were produced in vitro. *H.*

'Golden Medallion' (AHS, 1984) and *H.* 'Gold Bullion' (Pierre Bennerup/Pete Ruh, 1989) were the solid yellow leaf forms of *H.* 'Tokudama Aureonebulosa' and *H.* 'Tokudama Flavocircinalis' respectively. These

sports of 'Tokudama' have the same agonizingly slow growth rate as the parent. *H.* 'Golden Scepter' (Robert Savory in 1983) was a

derivative of *H.* 'Golden Tiara' from tissue culture. It did have a rapid growth rate, but being a *H. nakiana*-type, it had thin leaves and didn't hold the brilliant yellow color throughout the summer. Others like *H.* 'Sum and Substance'

although very popular because of its giant size and good growth rate, was more of a chartreuse yellow than a brilliant gold. In compiling this list, it was interesting to note that many of the wonderful golds have genetics from Mildred Seaver's breeding program. For example, *H.* 'High Noon', *H.* 'Sea Fire', and *H.* 'Split Personality', that Olga Petryszyn, Kent Terpening, and Hans Hansen further used in hybridizing, is a lasting

tribute to "The Queen of the Hostas" who was especially fond of gold leaf hostas.

The following are some of my favorite gold leaf hostas organized by plant size:

•*Hosta* 'Sun Mouse' (PP 30,033) (T.

Avent 16) is my favorite dwarf yellow hosta. A hybrid of *H.* 'Blue Mouse Ears' from Tony Avent of Plant Delights Nursery, it



H. 'Munchkin Fire'



combines all the great features of the parent plant with gold leaves. Because of its compact size it is great for the shaded rock garden, trough garden, or containerized as collectors keen on miniature hostas like to do. Thick rounded leaves are slug resistant like the parent. The clumps are topped with lavender-purple flowers on proportionate hosta scapes. This plant is both vigorous, maintains its good strong gold color, and remains dwarf at maturity.

- *Hosta* 'Bitsy Gold' (Robert Savory, 1985) is the counterpart of Bob Savory's *H.* 'Bitsy Green'. It has flat, narrow leaves from its *H. longissima* background. Unlike the variegated Japanese selections of *H. longissima* that were nearly impossible to grow and persist in gardens, *H.* 'Bitsy Gold' and *H.* 'Bitsy Green' form nice clumps and are a welcome change from all the heart leaf hostas. The lavender flowers on tall scapes



H. 'Curly Fries'

compliment the clumps. Although not currently mass produced in tissue culture by any major nurseries, it was a staple in production at Shady Oaks for many years and is still offered by collector nurseries. Because of its unusual leaf shape, it is distinctly different.

- *Hosta* 'Lemon Lime' (Robert Savory, 1977) is one of the fastest growing, most vigorous hostas I've ever planted. This hosta registered

as a hybrid of *H. nakaiana* has slightly ruffled heart-shaped leaves that are the most intense yellow in the spring. Although the leaves become more chartreuse later in the season it still remains attractive all summer long. The lavender flowers in July are pretty and add to the overall landscape appeal. Because of the plants uniformity, small size and fast growth rate, it is a great candidate for shaded borders or edging hosta beds which I did with this variety when I lived in Minnesota.



H. 'Seasons in the Sun'

H. 'Twist of Lime' is identical except it has a narrow green margin. *H.* 'Lemon Delight' has the reverse variegation pattern of *H.* 'Twist of Lime'.

- *Hosta* 'Munchkin Fire' (Randy

Goodwin 2009) is a gold hosta that has many things going for it, such as its vigor as well as the plant's ability to keep the brilliant yellow foliage all season, and has upright scapes of purple flowers, and my favorite, the narrow wedge-shaped leaves. I have used this hosta in trough gardens as well as edging along paths. It's truly a great plant.

- *Hosta* 'Curly Fries' (B. Solberg 2008) is an open pollinated seedling of *H.* 'Pineapple Upsidedown Cake' and has many of the best features of the historic variety *H.* 'Chartreuse Wiggles' but on a more vigorous plant. *H.* 'Curly Fries' has a fast growth rate and quickly forms a clump of narrow



leaves with a heavily rippled margin. It looks great in a container. Like the historic cultivar *H.* 'Ginkgo Craig', the very narrow leaves and extreme rippled margin are exaggerated on younger plants. The leaves will

become wider and

less ruffled when the plant is mature and in the ground. Frequent division will keep the plant in the juvenile form. The leaf color is most attractive in the spring.

- *Hosta* 'Party Streamers' (PP33277) (Hans Hansen/Walters Gardens, 2019) is a hybrid from the pod parent of *H.* 'Atom Smasher', another vigorous, squiggly leaf grower and *H.* 'Curly Fries' (pollen parent) that has wavy gold leaves with a

flowing habit reminiscent of Japanese Forest Grass

(*Hakonechloa macra* 'All Gold').

It is great for containers and edging and holds its gold color well. A multitude of attractive dark purple flowers



compliment the clump in midsummer.

- *Hosta* 'Maui Buttercups' (W. Vaughn, 1991) belongs in the oldie but goodie category. *H.* 'Maui Buttercups' is a Bill Vaughn hybrid of *H.* 'Frances Williams' and *H.* 'August Moon'.

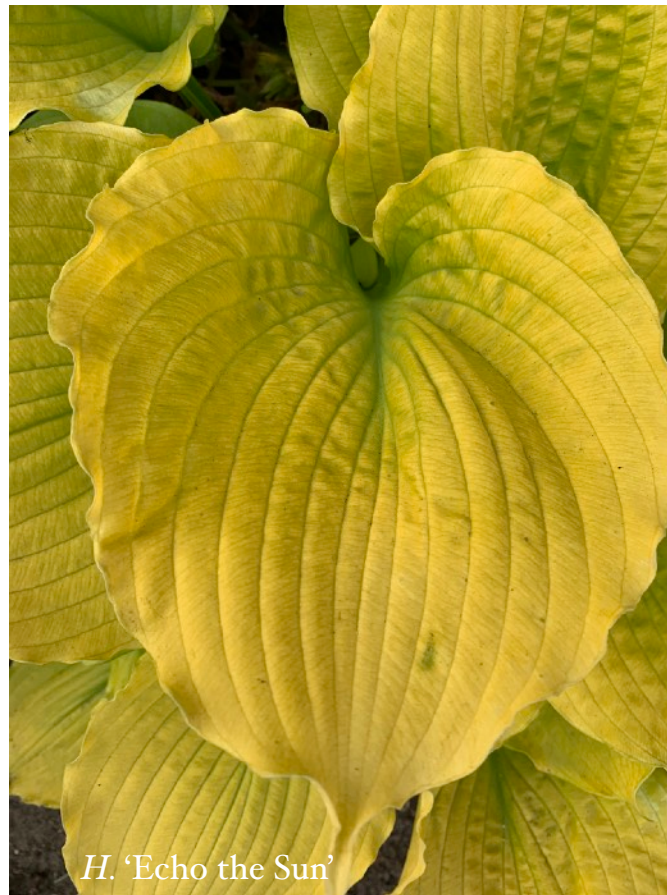
The heavily corrugated gold leaves are lightly cupped. A well grown mature clump is spectacular. I wouldn't have thought of combining these two parents nor would I have expected such a wonderful plant as a result, but I'm glad Bill Vaughn did. Over the years it has sported into *H.* 'Rainforest Sunrise' with a narrow green edge, and a ploidy shift to *H.* 'Pocket Full of Sunshine' with a very wide green margin. Both are great plants.

- *Hosta* 'Echo the Sun' (PP 35942) (Hansen/WGI 2020). I have been concentrating on rippled blue leaf hostas for much of my hybridizing tenure with Walters Gardens. 'Echo the Sun' is an example of merging the ruffled blue line using 'Neptune' with the gold of 'Dancing Queen'. The result is a

lovely mid-sized clump of ruffled gold leaves. This charming plant has a lot of character and always looks like it is in motion. Lavender flowers compliment the clump.

- *Hosta* 'Dancing on the Sun' (PP35944)

(Hansen/WGI, 2022) is a personal favorite of mine because it combines the genes of *H.* 'Neptune' and *H.* 'Grand Slam' to get the gentle undulating marginal ripples. *H.* 'Dancing on the Sun' is about the same size as *H.* 'Komodo Dragon', and the gold coloration of *H.* 'Dancing Queen'. This hosta has broad wedge-shaped leaves that spread horizontally. The architectural clump holds its gold color all season and commands attention in the



landscape. It is one of the most noticed plants in the garden.

- *Hosta* 'Dawn's Early Light' (Petryszyn, 1998). I remember the first time I saw *H.* 'Dawn's Early Light' and it's hard to forget since this hosta has a radiant glow in the spring matched by few other hostas. Hosta breeder extraordinaire Olga Petryszyn is known for her fantastic large hostas with



rippled edges. This is one of her earlier hybrids. *H.* 'Dawns Early Light' capitalizes on Mildred Seaver's brilliant gold in *H.* 'Sea Fire' and changes the form to a large heart shaped leaf with gently ruffled edges. The brilliance of the glowing spring yellow catches the eye from across the garden. Aptly named, the brilliant yellow leaves lose their intensity after spring and mellow to a chartreuse green.

- *Hosta* 'Seasons in the Sun' (PP34284) (Hansen/WGI 2020). This hybrid takes the gold coloration of *H.* 'Key West' and combines the rippled margins of *H.* 'Neptune'

and the fast growth rate of *H.* 'Komodo Dragon'. The nearly rounded leaves are held horizontally and draw the eye from across the landscape. The rippled leaves have a slight shine and because the petioles are abbreviated like *H.* 'Dancing with Dragons', the leaves are displayed ruffled and overlapped. The gold presents well and holds all season.

- *Hosta* 'Dancing Queen' (Terpening, 2005). Kent Terpening's brilliant gold hybrid of *H.* 'Split Personality' emerges with a glowing yellow. Its elongated heart-shaped leaves have a nice piecrust margin. With its brilliant yellow leaves and rapid growth rate, it has

become very popular and was selected as the 2020 American Hosta Growers Hosta of the Year. The intensity of the yellow leaves will mellow to chartreuse in the shade. In high light the leaves will brighten to nearly a parchment color. *H. 'Dancing Queen'* has been tissue cultured by the thousands over the last 20 years. Several margined and centered sports have been named including *H. 'Dance with Me'* and *H. 'One Last Dance'*, both incredible plants with great vigor and character but never achieving the popularity as the original.



- *Hosta 'Coast to Coast'* (PP26269) (Petryszyn, 2014). Olga's cross of two classic large hostas (*H. 'Manhattan'* and *H. 'Golden Gate'*) forms a giant spreading mound of thick puckered heart-shaped leaves. I love the gold leaves that maintain their brilliance all summer and the intensity of the congregation. Emerging flower scapes have the same attractive bracts that *H. 'Manhattan'* does before the developing flower buds open to very pale violet flowers on proportionate stems. Recently, a green centered sport has been developed and named *H. 'Brotherly Love'* to

add to Olga's Americana Series named after the 50 states.

- *Hosta 'Age of Gold'* (PP30902) (Hansen/WGI, 2018). This hybrid of *H. nigrescens* 'Elatior' and *H. 'American Sweetheart'* has thick gold, heart-shaped leaves. The leaves are not as broad as *H. 'Key West'* or *H. 'Humungousaurus'*, and form a tighter

clump. It has a great growth rate for its size and is an all-around great plant for the collector or landscaper. With its upright growth habit, it adds height to the hosta border. The leaves are nearly flat with the gentlest of marginal ripples,

with visual interest coming from the deeply impressed veins on the gold leaves.

- *Hosta 'Key West'* (Petryszyn, 1999). Probably the largest of the hostas introduced by Olga, this giant *H. 'Elatior'*-type hosta with platter-like flat gold leaves has a serene look in the landscape. As an 'Elatior' x 'High Noon' hybrid, it is a great choice as a specimen hosta adding light to the shaded landscape. *H. 'Lone Star'* is a recent dark green centered sport that is identical apart from the variegation pattern and perhaps even achieving a larger size at maturity. We have

found the giant hostas to have an exceptionally strong demand compared to hostas in other size categories.

- *Hosta* 'Humungousaurus' (Hansen/WGI 2023) is one of the largest hostas I've ever introduced. This marriage of *H.* 'Key West' and *H.* 'Viking Ship' produces a plant that has 19-inch heart-shaped leaves when mature and form an upright mound shaped plant that can reach 7 feet across. The giant, slightly domed shape leaves have a somewhat rippled edge but the prominent feature is the deeply impressed veins. Give this majestic plant

plenty of room to grow and develop its mature form. It has been a crowd favorite at Walters Gardens.

Like a ray of sunshine, gold hostas can add cheer and brighten the shaded landscape. My favorite way to use the large yellow/gold varieties is as a focal point or specimen to draw the eye across the garden, adding drama and excitement to the shaded yard.



Hans with *H.* 'Humungousaurus'

All photos in this article provided by Hans Hansen.

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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

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