



Heartland Hosta & Shade Plant Society

Spring 2009

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President's Message

Hello everyone! Spring is almost here and we will be able to get our hands in the dirt. I'm ready for it!

Our Spring meeting is scheduled for March 21st at

Faith Lutheran Church, 67th & Roe, Prairie Village, Ks. Due to a scheduling problem, the meeting begin at

10:30 am

Our speaker will be Clarence H. (CH) Falstad, III.

CH is a past president of the American Hosta Society (2001-2003). For decades he has been discovering sports and hybridizing hostas and other genera. He is Director of the tissue culture lab at Walters Gardens in Zeeland, Michigan, (one of our suppliers through the years).

Some of CH's introductions are Aristocrat, Hi Ho Silver, Heaven Scent, Amber Tiara, Heartsong, Regal Camelion, Emerald Tiara, Heartsong, Cresnet Moon, Crowned Imperial, American Masterpiece, Fair



Clarence (CH) Falstad



Blue Ivory

Maiden, Flame Stitch, Louise Ryan, Loyalist, Marbled Bouquet, Northern Mist, Norther Star, Pooh Bear and Venus. We wil have two of his introductions at our May plant sale: Blue Ivory and Regal Splendor.



Regal Spendar

In 2006 Clarence was the recipient of the Alex J. Summers Distinguished Merit Award. He spoke about the hosta flowers. He mentioned Montana Auremarginata (available at our May sale), Austin Dickinson and Venus. Venus was his pick for the most outstanding flower.



Montana 'Aureomarginata'



Venus

CH is currently the Strategic Planning Chair for the American Hosta Society. He is also developing a Hosta flower competition for the American Hosta Society Convention.

Keith Wheeler will have plant stands and hypatufa pots for sale at the meeting.

I hope to see you on Saturday, March 21st at 10:30 a.m.

Penny

**Hosta Meeting Saturday March 21st 10:30 a.m.
at Faith Lutheran Church, 67th & Roe,
Prairie Village, Kansas**



2009 Events

March 21

Heartland Hosta Spring
Meeting
(Faith Lutheran Church)

May 9

Heartland Hosta Annual
Plant Sale
(Faith Lutheran Church)

June 11-13

Midwest Regional Hosta
Convention
Champaign, ILL

June 24-27

The American Hosta
Society National
Convention
Lansing, MI

September 12

Heartland Hosta Fall
Meeting
(Faith Lutheran Church)



Is That Hosta Stable?

by C.H. Falstad, III—Holland, Michigan

I frequently hear people ask whether a particular hosta in a garden or show is stable. That is, will the leaf color and variegation remain consistent as the plant continues to grow over the years? The concern is not whether the foliage will change during the season, from spring to summer to fall, but whether it will differ in color or pattern from one year to the next. Although there are no absolutes, each of the four main types of hosta leaf color—solid green (or blue), solid yellow, variegated and streaked—has its own characteristic degree of stability.

Stability in Green and Blue Hostas

For the most part, hostas with solid green leaves have the highest degree of stability. Green-leaved hostas usually have all of their plastids—the microscopic plant cell structures or organelles that give the leaves their color—functioning completely and properly, in the correct places and spread evenly throughout the leaf. Blue leaves are essentially the same as green leaves but with a glaucous covering, so their stability is comparable. In solid-colored plants, all the cells of the meristem, or growing tip, have the same pigment, so if cell positions in the meristem are switched—that is, one cell from the outside layer bumps down into the lower layer as it divides—it has no effect on how the plant looks.

Stability in Variegated Forms

Hostas that have leaves with green and white variegation, yellow and white variegation and green and yellow variegation tend to be less stable than yellow hostas. Here again, it's difficult to generalize too much, as some cultivars within each category are more prone to sporting than others. But, in general, hostas with leaves of two colors are apt to be less stable than those with a single color. If cells in a solid-colored hosta shift to different layers of the meristem, the result is the same—a hosta with solid colored leaves. In other words, there is no visible change. But when the leaf margin is a different color

from the leaf center, these shifts are evident as detectable sports.

Just as certain cells of a young, developing human embryo form the bone tissue, while other cells from skin, certain pre-determined cells in plants form different tissues: some, the outer region of the leaves (the margins); others, the inner portion (center). Normally, these cells stay in their respective areas and form the proper leaf tissues. However, in a variegated plant, when the cells don't stay in place, the leaves can end up all one color, as when 'Guacamole' (B. Solberg - 1994) goes back to 'Fried Green Tomatoes (B. Solberg - 1995). In rarer instances, a complete patterned reversal can occur, as with 'Fame Stitch' (Walters Gardens - 1991) from *H. ventricosa* 'Aureomarginata' (K. Hensen - 1986) and 'Eskimo Pie' pp16290 (Walters Gardens, Inc. - 2004 from 'Northern Exposure' (Walters Gardens, Inc. - 1997)

Stability in Streaked Forms

The least stable hostas tend to be those with streaked leaves. The AHS Glossary of Hosta Terms defines streaked as "having a variegation pattern that has many non-connected light and dark variegated sections usually in streaks running nearly parallel to the midrib, an unstable form of variegation; i.e., 'Beatrice'."

Sometimes streaked is confused with a variegation type in which the margin jets or feathers toward the center in long stripes, sometimes irregular and many-colored. The numerous colors can make the jetting separation look like irregular streaking. To distinguish between jetting and streaking, note whether the jetting is connected to the margin tissue. If it is, the leaves are not streaked.

Variations in Stability

Even among streaked types, the propensity to stabilize—to move in the direction of a more stable form—seems to be inconsistent. In September 1982 I found the first streaked forms of 'Krossa Regal' (G. Krossa - 1980). Soon after, some of these streaked forms were planted out in trial beds. Today, more than 20 years later, most of those clumps remain

predominately streaked. Divisions with solid-colored leaves were removed probably only twice. In comparison, I once owned a plant of 'Yellow Splash' (P. Aden - 1976), registered as having leaves "green but splashed with wide splashed with wide splashed of gold." Within a year or two, it turned entirely into 'Yellow Splash Rim' (AHS - 1986), which has green leaves with a predominately yellow margin. Some plants, like the streaked form of 'Fragrant Bouquet' (P. Aden - 1982) appear to stabilize so quickly to a margined variegation that few if any hosta collectors who ordered the streaked form have ever seen it. If indeed the streaked form was sent to them, it's joked that it stabilized while being shipped in the mail.

Cultivars with streaked leave will stabilize more readily into margin- and center-variegated forms if the plant already has a solid color in most or all of the margin or center. If you intend to purchase streaked forms for a variegated breeding program, read Jim Wilkins' "Leak Show Exhibit: Hybridizing for Variegation" (THJ, Spring 1993, Vol. 24, No. 1, p. 17) and "In Defense of Streaking" (THJ, Spring 1989, Vol. 20, No. 1, p. 41). The best advice is to buy streaked hostas only by visual selection from actively growing plants (rather than by mail) so you know exactly what you are getting, and to select a form that shows streaking throughout each leaf. No leaves should have a solid margin or center, and certainly none should be completely solid-colored, Many wise vendors of hostas do not sell streaked plants unless the purchaser see them first, for the simple reason that they cannot guarantee the plants will emerge the next season with streaking intact and they want the responsibility to lie entirely with the purchaser. If you pur-

chase a streaked plant, be sure to separated any division that develops solid-colored leaves in you garden.

Stability in Hostas Versus Other Plants

Back to the question "Is that hosta stable?" My too-frequent and perhaps smart-aleck answer is, "It's a hosta!"

All things are relative. If we compare hostas with nearly any other plant we find they have a much higher propensity to change their leaf patterns. I like to compare the Walters Gardens' tissue-cultured hostas to other plants Walters Gardens propagates in tissue culture. In 25 years, producing over 5 million Gypsophila (baby's breath) plants, I have yet to see a single variegated shoot. I'm told there was one discovered in our lab before I arrived, but nothing since. Using Gypsophila as a benchmark, then all hostas are unstable!

Stability is not an inherently good or bad trait. Instability is the reason we have so many different and wonderful hostas, but it also is what makes them alter as they develop. The important thing to understand is that, among hostas there seem to be several levels of stability or instability. There is the streaked form of 'Fragrant Bouquet' that seemed to stabilize in the mail, the yellow hosta that produced three different sports within the first 500 plants propagated and the 'Dorset Blue' that has almost never produced a variegated-leaved form. All in all, hostas' rate of sporting is not at all bad. And aren't these many distinctive and attractive varieties part of the fascination of the genus *Hosta*?



We'll see you at the March 21st meeting at Faith Lutheran Church, 67th & Roe

Keith Wheeler will have plant stands for sale at our March 21st meeting



Heartland Hosta Society Dues

To ensure your continued newsletter mailings, please make sure you're current on dues. If you're not sure, check your mailing address label for the year next to your name. You are paid up through that year. We ask that you prepay at least 2 years at a time.

Join the American Hosta Society

The publications alone are worth the annual dues. Visit the AHS website (www.hosta.org) for the latest membership options.

Join the Midwest Regional Hosta Society

The MRHS (including both KS and MO) publishes two newsletters a year, holds an annual Summer Convention and a Winter Scientific Meeting. Dues are only \$10 per year payable to MRHS.

Send dues to:
Pete Postlewaite
MRHS Treasurer
21172 Andover Rd.
Kildeer, IL 60047

Heartland Hosta & Shade Plant Society
 Penny Balfour, Newsletter Editor
 4912 Pawnee Dr.
 Roeland Park, KS 66205

Heartland Hosta and Shade Plant Society Membership and Renewal Form

Your dues are currently paid up through the year noted next to your name on the mailing address label. We ask that all members prepay at least 2 years at a time to minimize the paperwork and bookkeeping. Dues are \$10.00 per year.

Check one... NEW MEMBER RENEWAL

Name	Street Address
City, State, Zip	Home Phone
Business Phone	E-Mail Address
Fax	Member of American Hosta Society?
Is Your Garden Open to Visitors?	Would You Like To Volunteer?

Please return this form with your e-mail address even if your dues are paid up. Return this form and your dues to:

Nancy Erwine
 900 Hillside, Liberty, MO 64068