

Volume 1
Issue 4

October
2006

SHADES of GREEN



HOSTA SOCIETY

Of

Southeast

Minnesota

Carolyn Harstad to speak at October General Meeting

Thursday, October 5 6:30 p.m.

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church,
559 20th ST SW, Rochester MN 55902**

Hans Hansen, Shady Oaks Nursery

To speak Saturday, Oct. 28, at 1:00 p.m.

Rochester Public Library Auditorium

101 2nd ST SE, Rochester, MN

Carolyn Harstad is the author (and photographer) of *Go Native! Gardening with Native Plants and Wildflowers* and *Got Shade? A Take It Easy Approach for Today's Gardener*, both published by Indiana University Press. *Got Shade?* was featured in the February 2005 issue of Taunton Press' FINE GARDENING' magazine as one of the 10 best books of the year. It was also one of 8 "Gift Books for Gardeners" recommended December 8, 2004 by the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

Carolyn is a co-founder of two successful organizations--the Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society in 1993 and the Indianapolis Hosta Society (1986). Her gardens were among the American Hosta Society's national convention tour gardens in 1989 and again in 1996. She won the American Hosta Society's "Savory Shield Award of Horticultural Excellence" for hybridizing in 1989.

She has been gardening with native plants for many years and received an Indianapolis Beautification Award in 2000 "for efforts to raise awareness of the value of native plants." A strong advocate for the environment, Carolyn was one of five Indiana women chosen to attend the National Wildlife Federation's "Leadership Conference for Women in Conservation" in 2001 and 2002.

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Hans Hansen began working for Shady Oaks Nursery in Waseca, MN in 1990 where many of us got our start collecting hostas. In 1993 he became Director of Research and Development with responsibility to manage the tissue-culture lab and propagating hostas as well as other perennials. Prior to that Hansen studied horticulture at the University of Minnesota and did a 9 month internship in a tissue-culture lab in New Zealand and Australia before joining Shady Oaks.

Hans and Shady Oaks has developed many great hostas: 'Pandora's Box', 'American Icon', 'American Sweetheart', 'Earth Angel', 'Touch of Class', 'Hanky Panky', 'Miss Siagon', 'Hope', 'Cherish', 'Titanic', 'Last Dance', 'Dance With Me', 'High Society', 'Key Lime Pie', 'Dark Shadows', 'Journey's End', 'Lonesome Dove', 'Mourning Dove', 'Prairie Sky', 'Yesterday's Memories', 'Old Glory', 'Stained Glass', 'Fire and Ice'. Other plants of prime interest to Hansen are ferns, Martagon Lilies, Peonies, baptisias and Clematis.

Originally from Jeffers in southwestern Minnesota, he was raised on a dairy farm. He helped with the vegetable garden and grew iris, daylilies and peonies that came to the family as "pass along" plants.

Today, Hans has a personal garden that is a mostly wooded 5 acre property with a large hosta collection.

Harstad to speak cont.

Carolyn became an Advanced Master Gardener in 1990 and wrote the initial guidelines for the Marion County Fair 4-H wildflower project. When she and her husband moved to Lakeville, Minnesota, she transferred to the Dakota County Master Gardeners. She is a Habitat Steward and an instructor in their training sessions. Her own property is registered as a Backyard Wildlife Habitat.

She is a member of the National Garden Writers Association, a Landscape Design Consultant, and an active member of several horticultural and gardening organizations, including the Twin Cities chapter of Wild Ones.

Carolyn's photographs have been featured in solo shows at the Art Center in Albert Lea, MN; at the opening of the Indiana Historical Society's History Market gift shop; and at the Circle Theatre-Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. Her photographs have also been displayed at the Indiana State Fair and at the Indianapolis Eagle Creek's 'Celebration of Nature'.



Congratulations to Betty Olson!

Betty entered the "Hosta Leaf Show" at the 2006 Olmsted County Fair and won "Best of Show" ribbon for her entry: Hosta 'Lady Isobel Barnett' hosta leaf!

Founder's Day

A dreary, drizzly, cool day did not dampen the enthusiasm of the attendees at the Founder's Day Potluck.

Special thanks are extended to Pat Ferguson for donating the door prize – the Hosta 'Emeralds and Rubies' which went to Sally Williams and some plants of Hosta venusta.

Special thanks to Dave and Denice Cocker who brought tables, chairs, and a large coffee pot, coffee and cups. Also thanks to Vickie LeCocq for bringing extra coffee. And thanks to Doris Amundson for bringing a lovely vase of fresh flowers. And to all who brought the great potluck food.

We saw some great hostas and several interesting companion plants that will give us much to think about over the winter months.

REMINDER

We are still looking for your favorite hostas and the hostas that you have been less happy with.

Please email me at jeanmeyer@att.net with a list (up to 10) of your favorite hostas. We would also appreciate a list of some hostas that have not performed well for you and what the problem was.

We hope to put together the information for the spring newsletter.

If you would rather mail me the information it can be sent to:

Jean Meyer
10236 95th AV NW
Pine Island MN 55963

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

OK, who stole it? Summer, that is. Seems to me we ought to get a couple more months of enjoyment

from our *hostas* before the leaves begin to yellow and Fall starts to take hold...is it just me, or are you feeling robbed, too? Don't get me wrong. Fall's crisp air, warm colors, earthy scents, the crunch of leaves underfoot and the slant of a lowered sun through the canopy (though not in my eyes when I'm driving!), are all very seductive. I just don't want to give summer up yet. But Fall is knocking loud and clear, making unwelcome advances! Brazen season that it is...

By now you are probably resigned to the ravages of Fall in the *Hosta* garden...but there are some wonderful scenes yet to behold if you have incorporated season-long interest in your garden

Among the plants people inquired about at the Founder's Day picnic are some of my favorite late-blooming *Hosta* and companions – all of which I highly recommend (these are the correct names after checking my inventory!):

Anemone tomentosa 'Robustissima' – this is the Grape Leaf Anemone that bears gorgeous pink blossoms on a 2 ½' tall dark green, almost shrubby looking plant (outside the parlor room picture window). It doesn't scream at you – it's just pretty in pink. (Part shade)

Kirengeshoma palmata (Yellow Wax Bells) – this is another dark green, 2 ½-3 ft. shrub-like herbaceous perennial with maple-shaped leaves and egg-shaped soft yellow buds that droop at the ends of the branches. When mature, it makes a very striking addition to the fall border. (Part shade)

Calamagrostis brachytricha (Korean Feather Reed Grass) – This is a bright green warm-season clump-forming grass with an upright habit and tops out at 1 ½ - 2 ft. Spectacular wands up to 4+ ft. emerge in September bearing pinkish purple flower heads that gradually become beige. The flower heads are wonderful dried. Re-seeding is likely, but unwanted seedlings are easily removed by pulling. (Sun to part shade)

Hakonechloa macra 'Albo-striata' (Japanese Forest Grass) – This form of Japanese Forest Grass is not common locally, but deserves more attention as it is a more rapid increaser. It has the same habit as the familiar *H. macra*. 'Aureola' (gold with green stripes), but it is taller and has green and white stripes. Mail order is your best bet to obtain this gem. (Shade to part shade)

Miscanthus sinensis purpurascens (Purple Flame Grass) – Blooming now at 5+ ft. with feathery purple

flower heads that become silvery, this is a mainstay of my fall garden. It has a

fountain-like appearance with leaves flowing outward, arching toward the ground. In contrast,

Calamagrostis acutiflora 'Karl Foerster' blooms a little earlier and its blossoms have now turned to a rich tan. *C. 'Karl Foerster'* has a stiffly upright habit. These both need at least a half day of sun.

Hosta 'Raspberry Sorbet' – This was the single most asked-about plant! It stays small, a mature specimen being only 12-15" high, with satiny deep green leaves and stunning bright pink/purple blossoms that are in perfect proportions to the plant. Plant it next to purple-leaved coral bells and Japanese Painted Ferns. It is worth the wait and makes Fall a little more appealing!

H. clausa – With bright pink floral tubes leading to balloon shaped purple buds that never open, this is more of a curiosity with narrow leaves about 12 inches high and bud scapes to 2 feet. It is also stoloniferous, so it is useful as a ground cover and needs to be planted where it can roam (yes, I know I need to move it!).

H. rupifraga – This gorgeous late-blooming *Hosta* is in the family tree of *H. 'Raspberry Sorbet'*, and while the family resemblance is obvious, this is a stunning plant in its own right, with drooping glaucous purple-spotted scapes loaded with light lavender flowers over a dense, deep green glossy mound of widely ovate-heart shaped leaves of great substance. It's slightly larger than *H. 'Raspberry Sorbet'* in my garden.

H. yingeri – This is a small *Hosta* with light-medium green satiny leaves and spidery purple flower striped with white, which are quite distinctive in the front of the border.

Japanese Painted Ferns (all forms) are valuable as they retain their good looks after other many ferns have died back. And I wouldn't be without the exotic blossoms of Toad Lilies (*Tricyrtis hirta* and cvs.) and the luxurious *Hydrangea paniculata*, its flowers having deepened to a rich bronzy pink.

It goes without saying that Fall can only look good in your garden if you have cared for it all season, providing extra moisture during dry spells, regularly removing weeds, controlling slugs and other pests, etc. So be sure to read the article by SOGHS member Jeanne Truustedt, "Stealthy Seedy Subversives Strike Again". Aside from being well-written and humorous, there's a message in there worth noting!

The excitement is growing! **CINDY TOMASHEK**

Meet Your Hosta Society Friends

By Linda Kofstad

Pat Ferguson

Pat Ferguson has played a very important role in popularizing hostas in the Rochester area by offering for sale a variety of hostas, including newer ones that were not found at the garden centers. She also made a huge contribution to the funding of our Society by donating well over 100 divisions of many hostas to our fund-raising plant sale this past May.



Pat Ferguson - the quilt behind an example of another of Pat's hobbies

Pat and Larry Ferguson were married in 1956 just after Pat completed college. She taught home economics in Byron for one year. When their first son was born Pat decided to be a stay-at-home mom. They have 5 children. One is in Rochester, two in the Twin Cities, one in Australia, and one whose home is Hawaii but who is currently in Iraq. Pat and her family have lived in the same house in Rochester for nearly 50 years. In that time they have developed a very beautiful yard. Pat comments that she can't remember when she planted her first hosta.

She has always loved flowers and gardening. After acquiring several greenhouses small enough to fit in her back yard she started growing and

selling plants to friends and acquaintances. But, there was a lot of competition for flowering plants. She realized that no one was selling hostas, other than the very common ones, and so she began specializing in hostas. At one time she offered more than 250 hosta cultivars. Pat has discontinued selling hostas, but she is still able to buy plants from the catalogs, and would be glad to do so for club members, but with the understanding that they are all sold before she orders. She has to order in lots of 12 or 20, and doesn't have a place anymore to hold them.

Pat says "there is no way I can tell you a favorite hosta -- there are so many that I love and I'm always finding new ones that are just as nice". She does say that early in the season she is very fond of 'Whiskey Sour'. The Fergusons also have a home at Alexandria, and Pat has moved many of her special hostas there, where she has more shade. Some of those favorites in Alexandria are 'Brenda's Beauty', 'George Smith', 'Five O'clock Shadow', 'Jane Ward', 'Savannah Supreme', 'Hanky Panky', 'High Flyer', 'Achy Breaky Heart', 'Light in the Forest', and 'Dorothy Benedict'.

Pat has a large quantity of hosta labels for several different hostas. She was about to throw them out but thought some of the members might like them. They could be easily cleaned and sorted. The price is right – just pick them up. If anyone would like these please contact Pat Ferguson at 288-5225.

Pat's biggest problem in raising hostas at her Rochester home is lack of shade since losing a large oak tree that shaded a big hosta bed. She has recently added many miniature hostas. The only hosta that she would not recommend is 'attoo', which has given her a lot of trouble.

To sum up Pat Ferguson in one sentence: She is a lady with a very big heart and a very green thumb!

"We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses."

Stealthy, Seedy Subversives Strike Again

Jeanne Truededt

There is a war going on in the woods! Seeds and rhizomes are sneaking in, around, and under plants to play havoc with carefully designed plantings! Pretending to be cute little ground covers, woodland sneaky little sad sacks are taking over faster than noxious weeds in a peat bog!!



Whoever declared that ignorance is bliss was never a gardener. Gardeners know from back breaking experience that weeds are plants growing out of place, and there's nothing blissful about seeing well intentioned 'mistakes' choking out carefully nurtured, lovingly tended, obscenely expensive plantings. Who could imagine that an assortment of romantic looking violets could obliterate a stand of wild ginger? How can Solomon's Seal and Jack-in-the-Pulpit cover and choke out mature hostas in just a few years? Why would Euonymus decide to climb trees in its desire to take over the woods? All I know for certain is I wish I'd known, back when I planted them, what I've learned the hard way through experience... I made some very false, naive assumptions about the potential invasiveness of woodland species.

Confining woodland violets, ferns, etc. into distinct areas is like herding cats; it sounds simple enough, but is next to impossible to do. That's why intelligent gardeners allow lots of space and turn a blind eye as these hardy plants steadily march across the landscape. For those of us who try to impose limits upon invasive species, we have many opportunities to meditate upon the errors of our ways as we

kneel to forcibly remove them. It's a bloody battle for supremacy, but the odds favor the plants! One doesn't survive in dense shade without a few seedy secret weapons of propagation and an army of guerillas to spread them!

This is the time of year to deploy a strategy of defense against an early spring offensive. Between removal of seed heads, digging out roots, and putting down thick layers of mulch, one can hope to slow the yearly invasion of unwanted plants. But the easiest means of keeping these subversives at bay is to not allow them to infiltrate your borders in the first place.

Over the years, I've had to rethink that 'weed' definition many times over. With a little extra effort, some root spreaders can be confined by planting them in plastic buckets (minus the bottoms) buried just up to the soil line. This allows ferns, Solomon's Seal, and such to exist peacefully within the woods. And a stand of perky violets in spring make adding mulch



seem like no big deal anymore. I no longer plant things in the woods just because it's free or looks 'harmless' without reading tags or checking growth habits.

At my age, I'm too old to wage war on my knees against seedy subversives that are weeds in camouflage!

Shades of Green Hosta Society
of Southeastern Minnesota

<http://www.soghs.org>

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MEMBERSHIP

Shades of Green Hosta Society
SOGHS
\$10.00/yr individual, \$15.00 family

Send dues to:
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5300 31st Ave SW
Rochester, MN 55902

Calendar

October 5
Thursday

General Meeting
Carolyn Harstad Speaker
6:30 pm
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
559 20th ST SW
Rochester, MN 55902

OCTOBER 28
Saturday

Meeting
Hans Hansen Speaker
1:00 pm
Rochester Public Library Auditorium
101 2nd ST SE
Rochester, MN 55904

January 20, 2007
Saturday

Winter Scientific Meeting
Midwest Regional Hosta Society
Schaumburg, IL
(check website below for more details)

February 2007

General Meeting

March 17, 2007

The Hosta College, Pipqua, OH

June 20-25, 2007

National American Hosta Convention
Indianapolis, IN

July 12-14, 2007

"BIX BLUES"
Midwest Regional Hosta Convention
Davenport, IA

Other Important Hosta Memberships

Midwest Regional Hosta Society

\$10./yr Send dues to
Peter Postelwaite
2112 Andover Road
Kildeer, IL 60047
1.847.438.7790

www.MidwestHostaSociety.org

American Hosta Society

1 yr \$25. Individual/ \$29. Family
2 yrs \$47. Ind/ \$52. Family
3 yrs, Ind/\$65./ \$75 Family.

Send dues to:
Sandie Markland,
AHS membership Sec.
8702 Pinnacle Rock CT
Lorton, VA 22079-3029
1.703.690.3021
www.hosta.org

Definitions

Genus – a taxonomic division of related species below family; e.g. genus *Hosta*

Species – the taxonomic division of freely interbreeding population of wild or naturally occurring individuals below genus

Variety - in botanical jargon signifies a distinct grouping in nature that, while still being part of the same species, varies slightly, often exclusive to a certain geographical area e.g. *Hosta longipes* var. *latifolia* (or *Hosta longipes latifolia*) is a distinct branch of longipes found in Japan.

Cultivar - a contraction word for “cultivated variety”; a plant that is clearly distinguished by identical physical characteristics and maintains these characteristics through proper propagation means

Sport – an individual arising from the result of mutation or chimeral rearrangement that is genotypically or phenotypically different form from the original individual; e.g. H. ‘Alex Summers; is a sport of H. ‘Gold Regal’

Hybrid - a seedling from two distinct parents

Chimeral Rearrangement - (in *Hosta*) the changing position of different pigments of different tissues in an individual, i.e. a gold margined hosta producing a gold centered or all gold division.

Genotype - the genetic makeup of a plant

Phenotype – the visually observed characteristics of an individual; physical appearance

Lutescent – possessing leaves which begin the season darker and become lighter or more yellow as the season progresses; not the result of bleaching due to poor nutrition or too much sun.

Glaucous – a waxy coating (or bloom) producing a white to blue coloring over the plant parts; the coating is capable of rubbing or washing off

HOSTA SPECIES

As *Hosta* lovers we are often only looking for the newest, latest, greatest *Hosta* cultivar that has been introduced. We await the newest hybrids from our favorite breeders. The following article discusses some of the characteristics of several (but not all) *Hosta species* and these are plants that also may be worthy of a spot in your garden.

– A Primer on the Traits of Hosta Species

A Discussion by Bill Meyer

(The following discussion by Bill Meyer deals with traits of individual *hosta* species that are especially noteworthy with respect to hybridizing. Bill sent it through *HostaPix* when someone asked for help in looking for traits when crossing *hostas*. It is reprinted with Bill’s permission.)

Montanas come in two basic types such as those features seen in 'On Stage' and the type seen in 'Frosted Jade'. The first type is a very common weed in Japan and somewhat non-descript in its green form. Some think it as a parent of a no longer accepted species like *Fortunei* and *Undulata*. Vigor is perhaps its best trait. Flowering can also be a strong point with tightly-packed racemes and colored bracts. The second type (*Macrophylla*) is a prime contributor to large leaf sizes with high vein counts. Breeders like Olga Petrysyn use it in their programs for this reason mainly.

Sieboldianas have very strong traits and are the source of two important traits----blue color and lutescence. Additionally they contribute good substance, rounded leaves, and rugosity. It's the second-most used species in hybridizing.

Ventricosa has not been used too much in crosses because it is very difficult to use as a pod parent. The strongest trait it contributes is the typical bell-shaped flowers, but lately through the work of Mary Chastain, it is showing really dark greens.

Longipes is a plant only coming into its own recently in hybridizing. It has an interesting collection of traits to contribute, including glaucous tops and white backs, highly glossy tops, very attractive flowering, pie-crusting, red petioles, and more.

Sieboldii is the most-used species in hybridizing. It was the original source for variegation in *hosta* ('Beatrice') so it was used very extensively in the last thirty years. Positive traits include fast strong growth, high fertility and high seed/pod counts even several generations away, red petioles, and excellent compatibility with other species. Negative traits are also strong and include poor substance and poor wax finishes on the leaves.

Hypoleuca adds some surprising traits. Large leaf size is the most interesting one, but others include attractive flowering, acceptance of blue and lutescent gold coloring, and white leaf backs, as well as strong vigor (strange as that seems).

Kikutii mainly contributes its distinctive leaf shape and strong vein structure, but is also good for flowering. Negative would be slow growth.

Pycnophylla has many good traits to add which are similar to longipes. Except for glossy waxes, the list of
continued on page 8

Hosta Species continued

positive traits is similar: white backs, red petioles, piecrusting, acceptance of blue and lutescent gold coloring, good flowers. Negative would be slow growth (most of the time) and slow production of leaves/divisions, and a strong tendency toward medium size.

Venusta's primary use is for small size, and it has little else going for it.

Capitata can contribute colored bracts and satiny waxes, and is a very early bloomer.

Nakaiana is good for vigor, small size, high numbers of leaves/divisions, and good fertility. Negative is that it tends to make plants look dull and ordinary. A good example would be 'Blue Cadet'.

Yingeri and **laevigata** contribute similar traits. Good waxes in the shiny and satiny ranges, some good red coloring (tendency to fade early though), vigor and fertility in later generations. Negatives would be not accepting glaucous waxes, so blues are nearly impossible.

Nigrescens can contribute upright plant form, red petioles, strongly upright scapes, and glaucous waxes. Negative would be slow growth and fertility problems in later generations.

Plantaginea positives---fragrance, vigor and sun-resistance. Negatives---serious fertility problems (can be very difficult to build breeding lines), and difficulty with glaucous waxes.

Leaf size is somewhat variable with most species and tends to work pretty much the way you'd expect. Extremely large or extremely small leaves tend to be hard to come by. Piecrusting does not seem to be species-related but good form in a piecrust leaf would require a strong vein structure.

Variegation will come in one of two ways --- 1. using a streaked pod parent will produce up to 70% (even higher percentages have been reported) streaked seedlings, so this gives the best results, or 2, growing large numbers of seedlings from non-streaked parents will occasionally yield a streaked seedling ('Dorothy Benedict' was created this way), but this is unreliable. Streaking seems to behave the same way with all species with regards to passing the trait on to the next generation. Most species have yielded streaked forms by now.

When trying to determine the species involved in a cross, relative bloom time can help, because crosses always bloom in-between the bloom times of their parents. Bloom dates can vary from year to year because of weather conditions, so they are best considered as periods defined by the species rather than calendar dates. For example, the first period would be sieboldiana, montana, and capitata bloom time, and the last would be longipes and kikutii bloom time.

This is just a quick thumbnail sketch of the information that's there, and others could add to it from their own observations. It would take a small book to really give a clear picture of all that's involved. Because it's so complex, there are vast possibilities in terms of different-looking plants to come. This gives someone a basic idea, but breeding will accentuate some traits and isolate others. Mixing three and four species into a plant will probably also make for some unusual results. Bloom time is very important in crossing, but not a solid barrier. Even this can be manipulated by starting plants early, or saving pollen from the past season. Fertility problems can cause a dead end as well, so more than one plant from a cross should be grown on.



Shades of Green Hosta Society of Southeast Minnesota Website:www.SOGHS.org
2007 Membership Registration Form

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(Needed for emailing newsletter)

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Check a committee/s on which you are willing to serve:

Membership Information

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Mn State Hort Society

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Membership Dues

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