

HSGC

Hosta Society of Greater Cincinnati

promoting Hosta culture in the greater Cincinnati area

2013 Winter/Spring

This Is Spring?

It's been a very cold spring with temperatures about 15 degrees below normal for the past few weeks. In some ways this is a good thing. My *Hosta plantaginea* aren't even thinking about poking their heads above ground. They're the ones that usually get nipped by our late frosts. I have high hopes for their unblemished survival this year, but nature may have other plans.

Fortunately *Hosta* are hardy and will likely survive any late frosts.

There are so many things over which we have no control in the garden. As Chris Miller mentions in her article, gardens are always growing and changing. Part of this evolution is the death of beloved specimens. While gardeners tend to be an optimistic group, with their sights set on the future, these losses can be frustrating. They can also be a path to a new and exciting future.

Your Editor

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Chris & Tom Miller's Garden *Bluegrass Hosta Farm*



As all gardeners know, gardens grow and change constantly. Ours is no exception! I say "I", but as everyone knows, the helper needs to be acknowledged as well!

We started the garden innocently but with enthusiasm as we moved to Kentucky from the true "Rocky Mountains" in Boulder, Colorado. My hunger and thirst for gardening was inspired by the constant deer problems and rocks that we encountered in Colorado as we tried in vain to plant a rose garden at our

home. In Kentucky everything grew! I went to work for a local greenhouse and then as the office manager in a local landscaper's office. That's when the real gardening adventure started!

I found numerous trees and shrubs that fascinated me, and with land available to plant, I decided to start planting my dream—my own park! As my gardens and experience grew, I was constantly tempted by perennials and more and more trees and shrubs for year-round interest. The



shade gardens took over, over time. While attending trade shows in Ohio, I met and was inspired by Wade and Gatton Nurseries and my now dear friend, Joan Day. I decided to start planting hostas and companion plants to compliment the already growing shady areas in the garden. In 2004, I was lucky enough to get an

offer for a significant number of hosta cultivars at half price. That did it! We began to build a few of the needed infrastructures for propagating *Hosta*. All the while I was traveling to *Hosta* events and learning more and more about *Hosta*, while still working fulltime. By September of 2005, I was ready to start selling a limited number of *Hosta* locally. I had determined that in our area, people just didn't know that there were more than a few *Hosta* cultivars. My business dream began to form in earnest!

By spring of 2006, my fulltime hours had been cut in half and I was starting to advertise and sell for real. The rest is history! We have continued to grow and expand with each passing year. Now our gardens have really started to mature and as I have more shade, we



Hosta 'Fragrant Bouquet'



have added new gardens. Our current gardens hold over 600 varieties of *Hosta* along with shade loving companion plants of all types. We continue to plant understory flowering trees and shrubs as they come to my attention, but we are slowing down now with the business demands and our energy levels! Maybe it is time to switch activities to less selling and

more enjoying!

Color starts in early April and continues through spring, with spots of color all over the gardens throughout the year. We love having visitors come in the spring to enjoy the fruits of our hard labor, and I also love to share information and knowledge about the *Hosta* cultivars available. I am active locally in gardening activities while Tom still enjoys being active at *Hosta* College.



Martagon Lily 'Sparkler'

We now have over 1000 cultivars of *Hosta* to divide and share. I think that is enough, although there is always another that catches my eye from time to time. We do not sell online as it would mean hiring employees, and we just do not want to go there. Time will tell if we continue to sell *Hosta* or simply downsize and pursue *Hosta* in other ways on a more limited scale. Who knew that a simple plant like a *Hosta* could change my world!

Bluegrass *Hosta* Farm is online at <http://www.bluegrasshostafarm.com>



Hosta 'Liberty'



Celandine Poppy and Brunnera



HSGC Officers

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Featured Sites

Naylor Creek



Nursery



More than 100 new plants for 2013
<http://www.naylorcreek.com>



Cinnamon exhibits antifungal and antibacterial properties
<http://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/view/858/>

The Hosta Geek

Cappy Johnston, an avid gardener from Lake Forest IL, has started a new website all about her favorite shade plant.
<http://www.thehostageek.com/Welcome.html>

Are Hosta Plants Poisonous to Pets?

According to the ASPCA, and other sources, hostas are moderately toxic when ingested by cats (and dogs and horses.)
Read more...

<http://www.aspc.org/Pet-care/poison-control/Plants/hosta.aspx>
<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/are-hosta-plants-poisonous.html>
<http://www.vetinfo.com/toxic-plants-checklist.html#b>
<http://www.cafegarden.com/community/topic/31989-hostas-toxic-to-cats/>

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<http://www.earthineer.com>

13 Must See Botanical Gardens

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/13/best-botanical-gardens-us-world_n_1879112.html



Gardening News Only

The latest gardening information, from the most interesting sources, all in one place.

<http://gardening.newsonly.org>

E-Books Directory is a growing list of freely downloadable ebooks, documents and lecture notes found all over the internet. You can submit and promote your own ebooks, add comments on already posted books or just browse through the directory.

Here's a link to the Botany section to get you started.

<http://www.e-booksdirectory.com/listing.php?category=344>

Dayton Daily News

The Dayton Daily News has a great garden section online.
<http://www.daytondailynews.com/s/lifestyles/home-and-garden/>

Ophiopogon

Tom McMannon

I've always been a fan of the grassy perennials like *Ophiopogon* and the related *Liriope*. Both make great ground covers under the right conditions, but *Liriope* species require more sun to look their best. *Ophiopogon* species can thrive in full shade and are not picky about soil type. Like *Hosta* they do best in rich woodland soils with even moisture and good drainage. I'm happy to say that they survive our clay soil, summer heat and drought with composure. To date I've not seen any pest damage. In the winter expect some minor leaf tip browning.

Ophiopogon hail from temperate to tropical Asia. I'm familiar with only 3 of the dozens of known species.

O. planiscapus 'Arabicus' (Nigrescens) or Black Mondo Grass, is the one commonly seen for sale at retail outlets. It has attractive purple-black leaves to 1 foot tall and spreads slowly to form large, somewhat airy, colonies. If you're disappointed with the habit of this one try the newly introduced *O. planiscapus* 'Black Beard' PPAF which is reputed to be more vigorous and denser.

O. japonicus 'Kyoto Dwarf' is my favorite for use under *Hosta*. It's 3 inches tall and quickly forms a dark green, impenetrable ground cover that will endure light foot traffic. To make your own miniature lawn, purchase or carefully dig up a mother plant and separate it into smaller clumps or individual crowns and replant on 6 inch centers in part sun to full shade. 'Kyoto Dwarf' will make a tiny tousel turf in a couple of years. Occasionally you'll see pale lavender flowers in early summer and metallic blue berries in fall.



The smallest of the genus that I grow was purchased as *O. japonicus* 'Gyoko Ryu'. It's only 1 to 2 inches tall and makes a great companion for smaller *Hosta*. 'Gyoko Ryu' is not nearly as vigorous as 'Kyoto Dwarf' but will still make a dense ground cover—it just takes longer.

I recently purchased *Ophiopogon umbraticola* from Plant Delights. Nicknamed *Bad Hair Day Mondo Grass*, it should grow to about 6 inches. Also from Plant Delights is *Ophiopogon japonicus* 'Seoulitary Man', a clumping selection to about 12 inches.

'Kyoto Dwarf' (and other *Ophiopogon* species) is easily grown from seed and seems to produce plants identical to itself. Unfortunately the seeds are loved by mice and other critters who may beat you to the harvest. Pick the fruits when they are fully ripe—showing no green. They will be a beautiful dark blue. Squeeze them between your fingers to release the seeds from the pulp. Wash the seeds and plant them 1/4 inch deep and 1 inch apart in fresh potting soil. Depending on conditions, the seeds germinate in 1 to 6 months.

The sources listed below offer several other varieties. Some are not reliably hardy in my zone 6a garden but might be worth a try in a protected spot or over-wintered as a durable house plant.

Sources:

<http://www.avantgardensne.com/catalog/category.cgi>

<http://www.farreachesfarm.com>

<http://www.glasshouseworks.com> (on hiatus since the death of co-owner Tom Winn)

<http://www.joycreek.com/index.htm>

<http://www.lazysfarm.com>

<http://www.plantdelights.com/>



O. japonicus 'Kyoto Dwarf'



O. japonicus 'Gyoko Ryu'

Coming Up

April 27 Saturday 11 AM
Middletown OH - Bern's Garden Center - New plants for 2013.

May 18 Saturday 10 AM
Terry and Marie Huizing will give us a tour of their beautiful garden.

June 8 Saturday 10 AM
Our annual auction and potluck at Jeanne Gourley's garden.

At the February meeting the club voted to donate to the AHS's Nematode Research program. Carol Kilberg received the following Email from the AHS:

Thank you so much for the research donation on behalf of the Hosta Society of Greater Cincinnati. Please extend my thanks to your entire club.

Thanks,

Rob Mortko

American Hosta Society

Vice President, Genus Hosta



Hosta College 2013

Tom McMannon

Hosta College observed its 20th anniversary this year. From extremely humble beginnings it has evolved into a late winter celebration of all things garden.

In the early years Hosta College was a half day of *Hosta* classes taught by the "big boys" of *Hosta* followed by lunch. The *Hosta* classes remain but have been augmented by classes that run the gamut from hands-on crafts to companion plants too numerous



to list here. Sessions on blogging and using PhotoShop to enhance garden photos have become popular.

If you've never attended make plans to go next year. The dates (the third weekend of March) and a link to the Great Lakes Region site are always included on the HSGC website's calendar page.





February 23, 2013 meeting with speaker Mardie Hay (pictured left) of Children's Hospital Horticultural Therapy program

