



Hosta Happenings

East Tennessee Hosta Society

January 2024

President's Message

One thing about when you get a blanket of snow - it becomes an equalizer - everyone's garden looks the same 😊. Our Hosta's will be loving this weather. The challenge that I face when I return to Australia is can I grow Hostas there? Most of the Hosta nurseries are in the very south of Australia where it is cooler. The area that I will be going to is in a more subtropical zone. I have always been told that Hostas need 600 hours below 40 degrees to really thrive. I believe that Knoxville gets about 800 hours. The coldest it gets where we are going is only in the forties so they may grow but not thrive 😞.

I hope you have been using this downtime to plan your Hosta activities for the year. There is a lot happening so buckle up. Next month will be our first meeting of the year

and Mary has developed a presentation that will enrich and entertain us, so you won't want to miss this one.

An opportunity will present itself in March where you can attend Hosta College in Piqua OH. Both Mary & I attended last year and delivered talks. Mary will also be delivering talks again this year and will also be the keynote speaker at the banquet. Let us know if you are interested in learning more about this opportunity.

April is the pause month where we don't plan any activities as it is such a busy month with plant sales and garden tours etc. This year's Dogwood Arts open garden program has selected our garden to be one of the featured gardens in 2024. I welcome everyone to come and check out what I have been up to in the garden.

(Continued on page 2)

In This Issue

USDA Hardiness Zones over Time for Tennessee	2-3
Plants and Freezing Temperatures ...	3-5
ETHS 2024 Calendar and Events	5
Support our Local Public Gardens	6
ETHS Membership Application; 2024 Dues are Now Payable	6

2024 Officers

- President Fred Anderson
- Vice President Beverly Smith
- Treasurer Liz Etnier
- Secretary Vanassa Workman
- Communications Mary Albrecht
- Contact ETHS at easttennhostasociety@gmail.com

Another not to be missed event is the Dixie Regional Hosta Society annual convention which will be just down the road in Nashville. This will be from the May 30 to June 1. Let's see how many members we can get to support this event - should be a lot of fun.

If there is something that you should do before you die is to attend an AHS national convention. These are a real hoot and you come away from this experience with lots of inspiration (apart from many new friends and unique Hostas) This year it is in Massachusetts from June 18-22.

I am currently the custodian of the club's library collection of every Hosta Journal ever produced. This originally came from founding member Howard Luttrell. Howard was a member of AHS and a master judge even before the club formed. I am looking for a home for this unique Hosta reference library. Please let me know if you can help with this.

It is that time of the year where you need to show your support for the club by becoming a financial member again. Your \$15 membership dues is great value for providing invitations to unique and exclusive events, an award winning newsletter every month and all covered by liability insurance. Either mail your check to our treasurer Liz Etnier or bring along to our first meeting on the February 25.

Please keep warm and an eye on those Voles.

Fred Anderson

East Tennessee Hosta Society

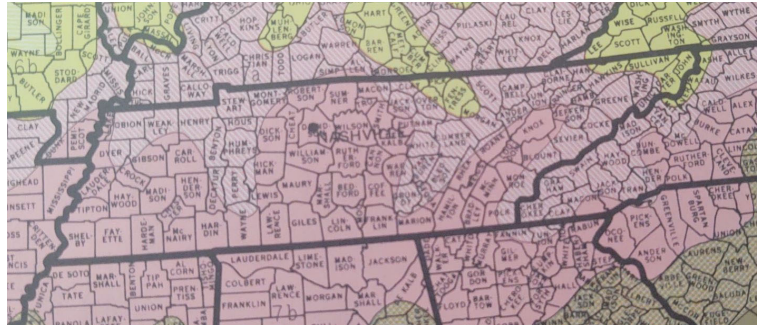
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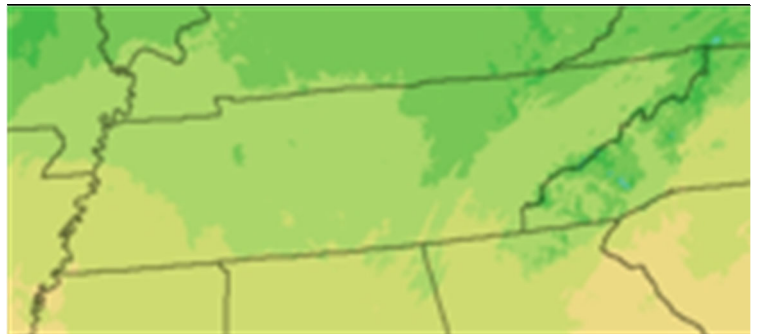
USDA Hardiness Zones over Time for Tennessee



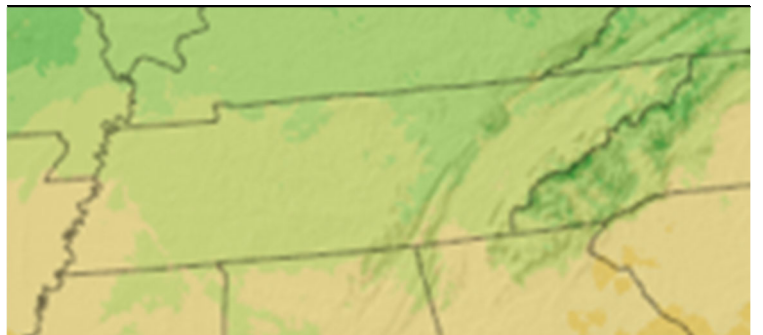
1972, photo of a hard copy map, USDA Zones 7a



1990, clip from a digital map, USDA Zones 6a, 6b, & 7a



2012, clip from digital map, USDA Zones 6b, 7a, & 7b



2023, clip from a digital map, USDA Zones 7a, 7b, & 8a

USDA Hardiness Zones temperatures remain the same, what changes over time is where those temperatures occur. Interestingly, according to an old paper copy of the map, Tennessee was in Zones 7a and 7b. Then in 1990, mapping showed Tennessee was colder. In 2012 it started warming and now the entire state is in Zones 7a and 7b with a little bit in 8a. Why? More data points and improved data analysis. Plants haven't changed their hardiness!



Mapping by the PRISM Climate Group College of Engineering Oregon State University

Maps taken from USDA/PRISM Labs

Plants and Freezing Temperatures

By Mary Lewnes Albrecht, Professor Emeritus and your friendly newsletter editor!

The short explanation is "Don't worry! Plants have had this handled for millennia." But, there is a longer explanation that can involve plant physiology. Here's an explanation in terms everyone should understand.

Different plant species handle freezing temperatures differently based upon where they originated. If the plant originally came from the tropics, it didn't evolve freeze survival mechanisms. This is why it's always useful to know where plants came from. Think about it this way, would you leave a peace lily (*Spathiphyllum* species and hybrids) out in the wintertime in East



Tennessee? No! Of course not. It's a tropical plant coming from places like Mexico, Tropical America, Malesia, and the Western Pacific. Most sources list it's hardiness zone as 11a through 12b.

Even with the recent revision of the USDA Hardiness Zone Map, East Tennessee is not that tropical. On the other hand, hardiness zones 3 through 9 are commonly listed for *Hosta*. They can survive freezes in East Tennessee (Zones 6 and 7 depending upon elevation) when they have already gone dormant. That's the key - they go dormant!

So, if it's January or February and we have freezing temperatures, herbaceous perennials that are dormant, will not suffer freeze damage. Woody plant material will behave differently. During the fall, woody plant materials (trees and shrubs) respond to the shortening daylengths and cooler temperatures to prepare for winter. Leaves go dormant and fall off of deciduous plant species. This reduces the surface area exposed to lower humidity that could result in moisture loss from the foliage.

Also during this period of shorter days and cooler nights, plants increase the amount of sugar, salt or other compounds mixed in the water in their cells - plant antifreeze. Having these chemicals in the cells of tree and shrub branches helps to lower the freezing point of cell sap. They can withstand much colder temperatures. Some plants will also reduce the amount of water in the cells by

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

translocating it into the roots. Dormancy also means plants just aren't growing - they are not doing the things that are needed for growth because they are not producing the carbohydrates in their leaves needed to produce more plant cells. Pretty amazing when you think about it.

So at this time of the year, when plants are dormant, they tend to be much less susceptible to freeze damage.

Now, if we are pushing hardiness zones, that's a different story. In my garden, I'm pushing hardiness zones. I have cast-iron plant (*Aspidistra* 'Okame' and 'Lennon's Song', both rated for Zones 7b - 10b), two unknown



amaryllis varieties (*Hippeastrum* Zones 8 - 10), and Thai Giant elephant ears (*Colocasia*

gigantea, Zones 8 - 10). Yes, we are now Zone 7b in the reclassification. Obviously, I'm pushing my luck with these plants. How do I handle it? Cover them with copious amounts of fallen leaves. The elephant ears and amaryllis are under about a foot of leaves. The cast-iron plants don't receive anything special other than some more mulch around the crowns since they are evergreen.

Camellias are another example of pushing the envelope with hardiness zones. *Camellia japonica* and *C. sasanqua* are listed as Zones 7 to 9. So we are in the northern area of their hardiness zone. Typically, with hard freezes at this time of the year, those winter flowering varieties will experience damage to the flowers because they are actively growing and expanding the flower parts. Flower parts do not undergo the described process of developing dormancy.

Freeze damage will be less obvious at this time of the year. We've had cold weather, plants are dormant. Freeze damage occurs with freakish, early freezes when there is an extreme drop in temperatures. Or, it may occur in the late winter when temperatures start to warm up and plants are coming out of dormancy. Plants have started the processes to begin growth and they become more susceptible to freeze damage.

So, the bottom line is don't worry about doing anything very special for garden plants now! They're dormant.

Start paying attention in March as plants are coming out of their dormancy then. The vernal equinox in March 19, 2024; days and nights are now equal length. Plants will know this and will be on their way out of dormancy. And, we have had springs when

(Continued on page 5)

ETHS 2024 Calendar

January - no activity

February 25, 2:00 pm, UT Ag Campus,
South Greenhouse Classroom Meeting -
Presentation by Mary Albrecht

March 24 Classroom Meeting - Presen-
tation

April On your own - Dogwood Arts
Spring Open Gardens - Featured gar-
dens 20 & 21

May 5 Plant Sale

May 19 Garden Visit Social

May 30 to June 1 Dixie Regional Hosta
Convention (Nashville)

June 29 Garden Visit Social

June 18 - 22 AHS Convention MA

July 20 Garden Visit Social

August 24 Regional President Visit

September 21 Garden Visit Social

October 20 Fall colors garden visit to
GATOP

November 24 Annual General Meeting,
end of year social



(Continued from page 4)

weather began to warm up in late February and into early March and then low and behold, freezing temperatures for several nights occur in March. That's when damage can occur. But not now while the plants are dormant.

Dixie Regional Convention

[Middle Tennessee Hosta Society](#) had agreed to host the 2024 Dixie Regional. It will be May 30 - June 1 in Brentwood, TN. Garden visits and lectures are planned. The current plan is to have the Auction Friday night so attendees can return home Saturday evening if they are within a few hours driving distance, saving one night at the hotel.

American Hosta Society Annual Convention

Have you ever been to New England? If not, here's your chance! June 18 - 22 in Marlborough, MA, meet up with other hostaphiles to enjoy outstanding gardens, listen to outstanding speakers, eat great food, and take an optional "Day in Boston" and whale watch tour. To learn more, visit <https://hostaconvention.org/>.

Welcome new members!

Welcome new members Steve Lytle and Sandra Daniels, Linda and Dennis Hopkins, all of Knoxville.

Support our Local Public Gardens

We are fortunate to have multiple public gardens in Knoxville. The ETHS supports them with the proceeds from our plant sale and other funds:

UT Gardens, Knoxville, , \$1,000 since they partner with us for our plant sale, host our winter meetings, and are home to the Cornelia B. Holland Tranquility Hosta Garden

Ivan Racheff House and Garden and Arboretum, 1943 Tennessee Ave, \$500

University of Tennessee - GATOP Arboretum and Education Center, 2634 Delrose Drive, \$500

Knoxville Botanical Gardens and Arboretum, 2743 Wimpole Ave., \$500

BECOME A MEMBER!



- Receive *The Hosta Journal*, mailed to you
- Gain access to members-only online materials
- Participate in exciting events and auctions
- Further your love of hostas and gardening

ETHS Membership

2024 Membership Dues are Now Payable.

Name(s) (please print) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Preferred Phone (Include Area Code) _____

1st Email Address _____

2nd Email Address _____

Are you a Hosta Beginner

Hosta Addict

Somewhere in-between

Approximately how many different Hostas do you have:

Fewer than 10

10-50

Over 50

Would you like your garden to be considered for an open garden tour by ETHS?

Yes

No

Maybe

Would you like to volunteer for an activity in our club?

Yes

No

Maybe

Annual dues for household membership (maximum of 2 members) are \$15. Membership is based on a calendar year.

Mail application and check payable to **East Tennessee Hosta Society** to:

Liz Etnier
Treasurer, ETHS
1405 Whitower Drive
Knoxville, TN 37919

Invite a friend to join!