



Hosta Happenings

East Tennessee Hosta Society

November 2020

Minutes from the 2020 General Meeting

Minutes of the annual meeting of the East Tennessee Hosta Society, held online via Zoom at 2:09pm on Sunday, November 15th, 2020.

18 members in “virtual” attendance were:

Fred & Sandra Anderson, Mary Albrecht, Brian White, Bob Goeltz, Cornelia Holland, Nancy Basford, Kathy Biehler, Cheryl Ferrone, Janie Bitner, Gina Buffum, Wanda Taylor, Beverly Smith, Fran Scheidt, DeeDee Blane, Jack & Beatrice Collins and Dr. Alan Soloman.

The meeting started with President Fred Anderson welcoming everyone and hoping that each of us had stayed well during this pandemic year. New member, Beverly Smith was introduced, who recently moved from Georgia, is now residing in Lenoir City. Beverly is a Master Gardener who enjoys, hostas, daylilies & hydrangeas.

Election of Officers for 2021: Those that held office in 2020 were willing to continue, except for our Secretary - Cheryl Ferrone. Wanda Taylor graciously agreed to take

that position. There were no other nominations from the floor.

President: Fred Anderson
Vice-President: Bob Goeltz
Secretary: Wanda Taylor
Treasurer: Gina Buffum
Director of Communications: Mary Albrecht (not a Board Position)

Jack Collins moved to accept the 2021 slate of Officers and DeeDee Blane seconded. All were in favor - motion passed.

Brian White inquired about UT giving as it takes place this time of year. Fred explained that since our club was not able to conduct normal business in 2020, that we will not be making that contribution this year. The 2020 Dues paid by members this year will be put to the 2021 club year.

Since there was no other business, President Fred Anderson shared a colorful and inspiring photo presentation of a wide selection of plants still in their glory in their garden this Fall. Examples were:

Peace lily, Abutilon ‘Biltmore Ballgown’ (common name flowering maple), begonia from Biltmore, Sasanqua Camellias (he has 40!), Miss Huff lantana, bronze leaf begonias, dwarf zinnias (preferred as they don’t fall over like the larger ones), re-blooming azaleas (77 of them along the driveway), angel trumpet (Beverly Smith

Last Issue for 2020

Yes, this is the last issue for 2020! Have a wonderful Thanksgiving! Hope your Christmas, Chanukkah, or what other holidays and events you celebrate between now January 1, 2021 are safe! And, here’s to a vaccine and maybe some face-to-face meetings in the future!

2021 Officers

President Fred Anderson
Vice President Bob Goeltz
Treasurer Gina Buffum
Secretary Wanda Taylor
Communications Mary Albrecht (plantprof@gmail.com)
Contact ETHS at easttennhostasociety@gmail.com

shared how to propagate before frost), ornamental peppers (purple flash), Shasta daisy, bougainvillea, frangipani, ginger - very fragrant, his wildflower garden - that attracts numerous butterflies, cosmos, Mexican sunflower, Tartarian asters, black-eyed Susan vine, mountain fleece/variegated knotweed, Robinhood climbing rose, nasturtiums, foxglove (from Art Davis), obedient plant, and Gay Blade Hosta.

Thank you, Fred and Sandra for sharing your beautiful garden, it's quite impressive!

There is a lot of interest in the Dixie Regional Convention. We are hoping to be able to have the event. (From Sept. 13, 2020 Board meeting, Fred indicated a decision will be made by Feb. 2021).

Bob Goeltz said it was "good to see everyone" and wanted to extend a thank you to Mary Albrecht for our newsletter.

The meeting concluded at 3:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Ferrone
ETHS Secretary

What Kind of Fertilizer Do You Use?

By Bob Solberg

(This article is courtesy of the Northern Illinois Hosta Society from their newsletter, Hosta Happenings, Issue 106, March 2019.)

Whenever I give a talk to a hosta group, the question always comes up, "What kind of fertilizer do you use." I'm never quite sure if they believe that growers like me have some kind of magic plant food that we use to grow our Hostas bigger and better or that if they really want to know what, when and how to fertilize their Hostas.

In the garden Hostas need light, water, and nutrients for healthy growth. Any fertilization program must take all these as well as soil type into account and balance the needs of the hosta. If you water a lot you will need to fertilize more often during the season as watering leaches nitrogen away from the plant (and/or garden). If your garden is very shady over fertilization will not necessarily produce bigger Hostas because of the lack of light. Sandy soils will leach nutrients faster than clay soils. **Get to know your garden.**

There are organic and inorganic fertilizers. Both contain the same nutrients (chemicals) but they come from different sources. At the cellular level Hostas "see" these nutrients identically. Organic fertilizers tend to have lower analysis numbers than inorganic ones and thus tend to burn less but you will need to apply them in larger amounts to apply the same amount of nutrients, making them often more expensive in time and money. They may also attract rodents (code word, voles) since several of the materials used as sources of nitrogen in organic fertilizers like cottonseed meal and alfalfa meal are used as animal feeds. Manure is a good cheap organic fertilizer that should not burn if properly composted.

Both types of fertilizers come as a liquid feed, a granular, and a slow release.

Liquid fertilizer, Peter's 20-20-20, Miracle-Gro, Fish Emulsion, etc., can be used as a drench into the soil or sprayed on the leaves only as a foliar spray. (If this is the only type of fertilizer you use then a drench is more effective.) Liquid fertilizer needs to be applied to Hostas at least once every two weeks during the growing season if not weekly since it remains in the root zone for only a short period of time.

Standard **inorganic granular fertilizers** like 10-10-10 are quite inexpensive and remain in the garden 4 to 6 weeks depending on the amount of rainfall. Thus two to three applications are necessary, beginning as the Hostas emerge and ending when their growth slows in the heat of summer.

Beware! Formulations with a high percentage of urea will release their nitrogen in a short period of time in periods of high rainfall and at best be washed from the garden or at worst burn your plants.

Slow release fertilizers like Osmocote and Nutricote release nutrients over time dependent on temperature and rainfall and have the advantage of only needing to be applied once a year. They come in a variety of formulations with Hostas preferring a nitrogen number of 18 to 21 [Editor's Note: reminder: that's the first number]. Choose a time of release, 3 months to 9 months that matches the active growing season for your Hostas. Many bagged organic fertilizers release their nitrogen slowly also and can be treated as slow release fertilizers and applied just once a year.

Which fertilizer you choose probably has more to do with you than your Hostas. What kind of gardener you are and how often you want to feed your Hostas? If you enjoy preparing snacks for your Hostas and want to shower them with tender loving care, then liquid fertilizers once a week during the growing season is the way for you to go. If you are a lazy gardener like me or one just pressed for time, then you should choose a 9

month slow release formula and fertilize once a year when your Hostas first start emerging from their winter's nap. The important thing is to have nutrients available when your Hostas are actively growing, from emergence to fall.

Probably the best way to fertilize is a combination of the two. Apply a organic or inorganic slow release fertilizer in early spring. Then supplement this with foliar applications of a high nitrogen liquid fertilizer with Epsom salts (18 to 24% nitrogen) maybe twice, a couple of weeks apart while the Hostas are growing at their most rapid rate. For us that is around the first and fiftieth of May. An application or two of 10-10-10 liquid fertilizer can also be applied in August when the Hostas make their "little flush" of new foliage, especially if all the slow release nitrogen has been released by high summer temperatures and rainfall. This diet is sure to fatten up your Hostas.



What fertilizer do we use in here in the nursery?

We grow all our Hostas in containers, so we can control as much as possible the environment in which we grow our Hostas. Currently, we are using a slow release Nutricote product sold by Florikan that has been blended with some soluble urea and

magnesium. It is actually three fertilizers in one. Since we want nitrogen available from day one for our newly planted liners, there is some soluble nitrogen for the first week or two. Then some 10-10-10 like fertilizer with magnesium for the second and third weeks and then in the third week the Nutricote kicks in. The Nutricote works great in regions of the country that have hot summers, releasing its nutrients evenly into the fall. Our formulation is 14-5-10 [Editor's Note:

Different from product shown] and because we would like the nitrogen number to be up near 20 we apply the fertilizer at the “high” recommended rate rather than the normal rate.

We like this fertilizer so much that we now sell 20 pound buckets of it here at the nursery under our own private label. It is called “Green Hill Hosta

Fertilizer” and we are now licensed as a fertilizer manufacturer in North Carolina. Sorry the law does not allow us to ship our fertilizer to other states but you can legally come to the nursery, pick it up, (with a few new Hostas to boot), and take it back home. Our local customers keep coming back for more!

Tips to remember:

1. Use a foliage feed as a supplemental feed especially for magnesium (Epsom salts at 50 ppm) and trace elements when your Hostas are actively making new leaves.
2. Hosta roots do not grow during the winter. They stop growing when the plant goes dormant and begin only after the soil has warmed in the spring. New roots are not made until after the first flush of foliage has unfurled. Winter fertilization for added root growth is unnecessary.
3. You can test your soil throughout the season to measure the available nutrients in the soil. It may be more fun to test your hosta leaves for their nutrient content. Hosta leaves can be tested by most State Labs to determine the amount of nutrients that actually are available in the plant not just in the soil.



Notes from Bob Solberg 8/22/18 – “We have now changed fertilizers again. We use a formulation from Harrell’s, a slow release 17-6-12. The reasons for the change have to do with the fertilizer but mostly how it can be purchased, I do not need a broker

to get it sent to me, I can deal directly with Harrell’s. It also seems to work as well or better than the Nutricote.

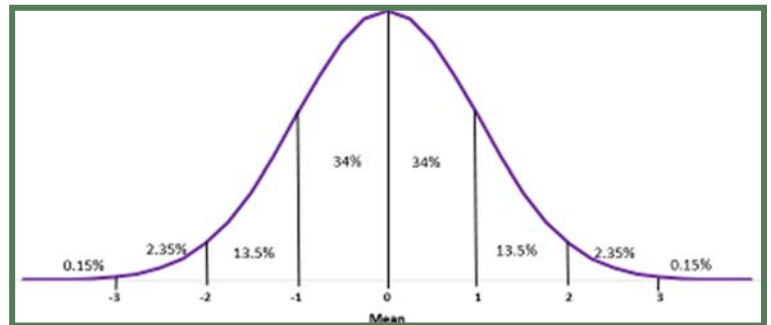
Editor’s Note: Harrell’s sells online in 50 lb. bags.

Extra Watering of Trees is the New Norm

By C. Elizabeth Hamilton, PhD, Adjunct Faculty, University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries, www.betternature.solutions

Year-round Watering of Trees

We are experiencing more frequent droughts and extreme weather events. In statistics (whoa! Slow down there—why the math? It’s needed and will be quick and pain-free) these are called ‘tails’. See the graph with the



2.35% probability of occurrence at the ‘tail’ of the curve on either side? These are now much thicker/fatter tails, with the midline (average at 0 which is just an example not an actual value) events becoming much thinner. Events that once occurred at a 2.35% probability are now occurring 18% or more, more frequently. That’s an order of magnitude more! While the middle used to be 68% of events [add those two middle sections that are 34% each], it’s now around 40% or less. So the norm happens less often and the weird happens more often and that trend is increasing.

Stats Done!

So, gardening needs to reflect these changes in the norm and this means a lot more attention to tree care. This includes watering year-round, keeping the canopy thinned (not lion-tailed), and using sterile pruning as



much as possible. The canopy thinning and sterile pruning fight disease and maximize the energy making from the tree's canopy. Watering is critical to keeping the plant able to do everything from making cells to repairing them, as well as fighting disease.

A good rule of thumb, presently, is to water your trees when there are six or more days without precipitation during the growing season. During winter months, when temps are above freezing, when there are more than 10 days without precipitation, water as well. Watering in the evening is ideal during the growing season to retain moisture longer. Watering in the late morning or midday is ideal in the winter. How long a tree is watered is complicated! If you want specifics, contact this author. Otherwise, life is complicated enough presently so water the length of time you normally water your yard during the growing season and apply 1/3 that length (or amount) of watering in the winter. This may be 20- to 30-minute soak in the

summer and a 10- to 15-minute soak in the winter.

Mulching Madness

Mulching for water conservation would mean making a donut around your tree at the canopy dripline with a width of a few

to several feet from that drip line (depending on size of tree). Mulching at the base of the tree, under the canopy, is a waste of time and money and could easily do more damage than good. I offer several webinars a year about this problem because it is so pervasive and



harmful (heartbreaking, too). Plants around the base of the trunk of your tree are just fine!

Instead of mulching, I recommend treating your soil so it can better hold water and making sure there is no root girdling. This means correcting roots that have been badly mulched or planted too deep. Assessing your soils' pH, and if you can afford, macro- and micronutrient testing, is useful. Fertilization is another tricky topic for trees. Traditional fertilizing using NPK fertilizers like a 10-10-10 can actually damage your soil microbes. Without beneficial soil microbes we would not have land plants and many trees and rhododendrons and azaleas and blueberries, etc., cannot live without their beneficial partners!

You've probably picked-up on the root-focused approach I'm recommending. Roots are easy to forget and are literally and figuratively the foundation of nearly all plant life. As life becomes more complicated for **ALL** living things, foundation-focus is a good survival strategy.

Hardy Cyclamen

Hardy cyclamen are a delightful edition to any shade garden. They emerge in late summer, flower, and the foliage is persistent through the winter before going dormant in the spring. Photo courtesy of Nancy Robinson who explained that the ants will spread the seeds!

