



News & Current Happenings

East Tennessee Hosta Society

October 2018

President's Message

I can't believe how quick the weather turned. One minute we were in the eighties & the next day we were in the sixties. I am scrambling to get all of my sensitive plants into the greenhouse before the cooler temperatures arrive. I have heard reports that the Hostas have all gone down for the winter in the northern states. Although I have had a couple go down – my Hostas are still looking reasonable. I have included a very timely article by Mary Chastain on how you should prepare your Hosta beds for the winter – makes an interesting read.

Our next meeting will be on Sunday 28th October at 2.00pm at UT gardens greenhouse rooms. I hope you are able to make it as I have prepared an entertaining presentation to educate and inspire you. It is always fun to catch up with gardening friends.

The November meeting is our AGM where we get to elect officers for 2019. This will be on the 18th November at 2.00pm at the UT gardens greenhouse rooms. I can't encourage you enough to consider taking on a role in the club. The time involved is very light and your contribution enhances your membership. The more you put into something the more you get out of it.

The only other activity planned for the year is the Christmas get together on the 2nd December. This will only happen if we get enough interest.

I was approached by the Knoxville Botanical Gardens recently for the Hosta Society to sponsor a shaded garden bed near the visitor center. I did check it out and is an ideal area for Hostas and other shade loving plants. Have a think about this and let me know your thoughts.

One thing I have thought about is having a Hosta swap within the club. I am sure we all have surplus Hostas of a variety that we would love to swap out with something different. Let me know your thoughts.

Looking forward to catching up with everybody at the meeting on the 28th.

Fred Anderson

2018 President

East Tennessee Hosta Society



Balance the Scales

By Mary Chastain of Lakeside Acres



To clean or not to clean—that is the question?

Fall clean up time is just around the corner. Lately I have read articles dealing with how we should leave out a Hosta garden for the winter. As in life, there is no perfect method that can meet the needs of all. Some articles have been emphatic in stating that leaving leaves on the garden is the thing to do. I agree with the idea that leaves offer protection for the plants during the winter months and that they also provide nutrients for the soil. They help keep the ground cool in the spring so our Hostas are not as likely to emerge too early. This is good and I concur with those things. Other articles have dismissed the fact that it is good to remove all of the weeds and old foliage from the garden in the fall. At

this time I wish to say leaves may hold excessive moisture as well as fungi both of which can be harmful to your Hostas. The leaf cover provides an ideal space for a well-run hatchery for the proliferation of slugs. Leaving old plant foliage contributes to the spread of fungi and any diseases that may be present.

My proclamation is that what works for one is not necessarily for the good of all. If you live in a vole infested area, letting the leaves remain on the garden will just about guarantee you lose Hostas over the winter months. Voles prefer to move and work in a protected environment. They believe that this wonderful blanket of leaves was created just for them. Under this cover they build a network of freeways which takes them from the banquet table of you Hostas to the playground where they invite their family, friends and neighbors to come and partake of the buffet. They laughingly announce that there is plenty for all.

Cleaning the weeds, old foliage and leaves in the fall reduces the chance of spreading disease. It also lowers the risk of vole attraction. It eliminates many of the hiding places for voles and slugs. A clean surface allows for the early spring treatment for slugs and provides easier access for fertilizer. Keeping the slug population low during fall and winter eases your battle for control during the growing season. Removing diseased materials lowers your risk of incurring trouble next year. For example, consider the possibility that the plants and mulch you leave may be contaminated with the fungus that causes southern blight, and how much more likely you are to be plagued with it the following season.

Once the garden is clean and ready for winter a thin layer of clean new pine needles can be spread to offer some winter protection and diminish the washing of your soil. A thin covering of pine needles allows air to circulate over the ground. Though they offer some shade and protection for your plants, they are open enough to discourage the construction of a vole playground.

Now that you have weighed the pros and cons, you must balance the scales to meet the situation in your garden, and decide whether the value of leaves in your garden outweigh the disadvantages that they may offer.



Member Profile

Each month we profile a member to help us get to know other members better. Be ready for your turn.

This Month's Member is 'Nancy Basford'



Nancy Basford moved to Oak Ridge TN in 1968 from Kansas. Nancy has a small family. She and her husband, Jim Basford, have been married for 52 years and have two adult sons, Doug (married to Frances) and Dave. She has a sister who lives in Arizona. No pets except the raccoons, deer, possums, squirrels, skunks, chipmunks, and foxes that live in the woods behind her house.

Nancy was an emergency medical paramedic with Roane County EMS ("on the road" for 10 years, followed by 12 years as overseer of drugs/narcotics), retiring in 2011. Working 24 hour shifts (sometimes 48 hours on overtime) was certainly a challenge.

In her retired "spare time" she takes a variety of classes at the Oak Ridge Institute for Continued Learning (ORICL) with her favorite being the Latin classes for the past 10 years. Also, she enjoys her dulcimer club where she plays hammered dulcimer, teaches others to play it, and helps out the club in many duties over that club's 29 year history. She also attends her two favorite music festivals every year, one in Michigan and the other in Kentucky.

Nancy was one of the original members of ETHS (began in Feb. 1999) and was at the first garden tours in 1999 (gardens of Art Davis and Brian White in May and of Don & Sue Williams in July). She has been either ETHS treasurer or secretary during most of ETHS's 20 years.

Nancy's garden is the size of a postage stamp (!!!), but the 25 varieties of Hostas therein have been gradually added over the past 20 years and are ALL mini ones except the medium size Striptease which is Nancy's all-time favorite. There are also 2 or 3 "mystery" Hostas as well. A cancer survivor, Nancy is not able to do much gardening now due to the residual effects of the treatments. However, she does keep the Hostas and companion plants watered.

In Nancy's past.....not widely known.....she lived in Sydney, Australia for 6 years where she attended all of her middle and high school years at Roseville College (for girls). She then returned (complete with an authentic Australian accent) to the US to attend the University of Kansas majoring in Zoology.

Elin's Column



Elin Johnson (Master Gardener extraordinary) was the editor of this newsletter for nearly 20 years and many of those years as President. Her contributions are very appreciative.

Remembrances

I wondered what to title my October message. It is partly about Bob Solberg, partly about Conferences, and partly about some of my favorite Hostas. Maybe it ought to be called "Remembrances".

We were **so** fortunate that Bob came to speak at our August meeting. I have known Bob ever since I attended my first hosta conference. Those of you who don't belong to the American Hosta Society or don't attend the conferences may not be aware of just how important he is to hosta societies in general. This is not just for the Dixie Region, although he is president of our region presently. He travels all over our country speaking at conferences and selling his wonderful Hostas.

Each conference has its own "conference hosta" that is given to all who attend. Most of the time these are ones that have been developed by Bob. (They are not always registered varieties—some are unique to those who attended a specific conference. At the 2008 Dixie Region Conference in Nashville we were given a hosta named 'Tennessee Waltz'. It is a nice light green hosta, not registered, and Hosta library says it was developed by Mark Zilis. 'Alabama Sunrise' (Birmingham Dixie Region) and 'Biscuits and Honey' (Clarksville Dixie Region) do not even appear on Hosta library, but I think they were both supplied by Bob Solberg. The American Hosta Society Conference held in Nashville in 2010 featured 'Delona's Smile', a beautiful yellow hosta. Named for one of the charter members of the Nashville club, it is registered and was developed by Bob.



But other plant societies hold their own conferences, and I happen to have attended two in Ashville, NC—one for the Conifer Society and one for the Rock Garden Society which I have belonged to for many years. Bob Solberg was there, too. Three of the large Hostas that were the best performers in my garden I bought from Bob in Ashville. 'Dandy Lion' (Beilstein, 2011) is the very large quilted yellow hosta that was the centerpiece in front of the bed under the cherry tree, and 'Spartacus' (Hansen 2007) lived behind the cherry tree.



And I have talked about the third one, my favorite, 'Thunder Boomer' (Solberg 2007), before. I don't think any of the three have been sold in Knoxville, so were unique to my garden.



I highly recommend that you attend conferences. They are a lot of fun! Plan to go to one next year, and I guarantee you'll see Bob Solberg there.

* **New Member** *
* **Mary Albrecht** *
* **Welcome!** *

Tips for rodent control for your Tulips



Some of us plant bulbs among our Hostas to add some color in early spring before the trees leaf out. I hope these thoughts are useful to you.

Are you having difficulty with critters & your tulips! Same here! Between the squirrels & voles, our yard is a smorgasbord for them! For what its worth, a few "tricks" I've used are:

1) Reusing the quart or gallon containers from previous plant purchases: I plant 3 bulbs in a quart and 5-7 in a gallon container with about 1 - 1 1/2" of small gravel or "chicken grit" in the bottom, then the bulbs, enough soil to cover the bulbs, then about a 1/2" of gravel/chicken grit and finish with soil or compost. Then plant the container in the ground level with the soil. Voles can't get in from the sides and squirrels will be less likely do dig down & through the grit. Using the grit/gravel on the bottom helps keep the bulbs from "sitting in water" if we have a lot of rainfall.

2) I've also planted in the ground using "chicken grit" in the hole surrounding the bulb when planting. Tried this for the first time late last fall/early winter, and so far all the tulips have come up.... Sort of the same concept that critters don't care to have to dig through "rock". Will have to see how they perform next Spring! *(I've also done this in planting some of my Hosta's in the ground with hopes to discourage Voles from partaking of the roots & crown - at least while the plants are young!).

3) Probably the easiest and "prettiest result" is to "interplant" with bulbs critters don't like: in other words, put your tulips in the center, yet around them plant Daffodils, Alliums, Hyacinths, or Muscari (grape hyacinths - which will take over!), as those bulbs give off a scent digging & burrowing critters don't care for....

4) Wire cages or Hardware Cloth (1/2") - you can purchase or even make your own cages, but for me this was way too much work & cut fingers!

5) Lastly, I plant them in potting mix in recycled plant containers and keep them in the garage to over winter

so they get their "chill" hours. Just b4 they bloom, I'll transplant them into decorative containers we have around our yard. We got a great "pop" of color from them this year with no fear of Voles or Squirrels! My containers in the yard are shallow so this method worked great for me. If I had larger & deeper ones, I might consider "layering".... Where you place tulips on the bottom layer (roughly 6-8" down from the top), then daffodils, and maybe hyacinths. Layering is done based on the "depth" needed for the bulbs. Though the results are very dramatic, downside is if you choose to plant for seasonal color, chances are whatever is planted later would be competing with the bulbs for soil/oxygen/nutrients/and room. Just something to really research.

Squirrels like to dig where the earth has been disturbed. So if you can camouflage the area you've planted bulbs, maybe the squirrels will stay away (they are curious and looking to see if the previous "digger" may have stashed some nuts!!). Sadly, the Voles are another story...

Lastly, I keep hearing Tulips perform more as an annual here. For me, I average 2 years of decent performance, then I take them out. Though I have one small "cluster" that has been in for at least 4 years (though the bloom count is much less this year), and its tucked in an area tight with day-lilies, and I don't do a thing to them!

Anyway, just some thoughts I'd thought I'd pass along your way!

~ Cheryl ~

A Blast from the Past

Recognize anybody here and where was it taken? The year is 2005



Action Checklist

- Think about joining the support team
- Mark your Calendar for the 28th October meeting
- Invite your gardening friends to become members