

THE CHATTANOOGA REGIONAL HOSTA SOCIETY

THE HOSTA CONNECTION

DECEMBER 3, 2011
12 O'CLOCK
CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON
AT
THE McMASTERS HOME

Directions: From Hwy 153 – go north on Hwy 58 – 3 miles -- at bottom of hill turn right onto Champion Rd – go 2.2 miles turn right onto Lone Hill Road – go ½ mile to end of road – house is tan and brick.



Notes from the Editor

“HAPPY THANKSGIVING”, Johnny and I have a lot to be thankful for. Our Lord answered our prayers - for Johnny to beat 'that monster' cancer. YES he still is in remission.

I'm almost finished decorating for Christmas, we still have the outside to do and the family tree which we will decorate this Friday evening with our grand daughters, daughter, and son in law, this is a 'tradition', and Johnny will make his famous chocolate chip cookies.

This year I will display my Christmas village, last year Johnny was unable to carry the heavy boxes downstairs. I love to set up the Christmas village, it takes me back to my childhood when I played with toys.

The plant auction at the October meeting was very successful, we had lots of plants but only a few members were able to attend. I was kinda glad of the low turnout because I didn't have as much competition on bidding but sad because the club didn't make as much money. We always have a large turnout of members and plants for the spring auction, there is usually a bidding war which is fun (only if I get my Plant). I'm looking forward to the auction this spring.

HERE'S WHATS COMING UP FOR NEXT YEAR.

Our February meeting will be held at the Barn Nursery, (March & April was already booked), Craig Walker will conduct the program.

June 13-16 is the American Hosta Convention in Nashville, we are sponsoring Bob Solberg. Johnny and I are planning on attending and volunteering to work, this might be something you would also like to do. There is a web site www.hosta2012.com you can check out.

We need to make plans for up coming programs come with ideas, maybe a another field trip.

We always have a picnic and garden tour included. Maybe this year one meeting will be just visiting different gardens.

The Hosta Society no longer has a web site since we lost Ed Chapin, we need someone to volunteer to be the new web master.

FALL SLUG CONTROL

By Mary Barnes

Did you know that fall is still egg-laying time for slugs? We tend to forget about them as the hosta leaves change color and head into dormancy. The slugs will be active until the soil temperatures reach freezing when they will go into hibernation until the spring thaw.

So, until that happens, they will lay eggs. Mating will occur from August to mid- December with eggs laid about 30 – 40 days after that. Look for 1/8 to 1/4 inch sized gelatinous clusters of about 20 – 30 spheres. Older slugs will lay larger quantities. The eggs may be hard to see as they can reflect their surroundings. When the eggs are near hatching, the spheres may become cloudy.

Slugs love those piles of leaves, damp from heavy dews and fall rains. Look for them under anything that will keep them cool and moist. Other favorite places will be flower pots, boards, cooled compost piles, at the edge of large rocks or under mulch.

Look for the eggs and the slugs as you remove garden debris so they don't end up overwintering in the compost pile.

So keep treating for slugs. Your hostas will thank you in the spring.

DIFFERENT OPIONS FOR FALL CLEAN UP

Lately I have read articles dealing with how we should leave our hosta gardens for the winter. There is no perfect way. Some articles have leaving leaves on the garden is the thing to do. I agree with the idea that leaves offer protection for the plants during winter months and they provide nutrients for the soil. They help keep the soil cool so the hostas don't spring up to early and then get bitten by a late frost.

Other articles have dismissed this fact saying it is better to remove all of the leaves, weeds and old foliage from the garden in the fall. The leaves may hold excessive moisture as well as fungi, and this can spread throughout the garden. The leaf cover provides space for slugs (see article above) and vole families to populate. After the garden is put to bed by cleaning up old derbies, put down a light layer of pine needles, the points of the needles discourage voles.

I have tried both ways, not by choice, last year I was unable to put my garden to bed, the voles had a picnic, I lost several hostas, and still had the garden to clean up this spring.

This year as in past years I blew all the leaves off the beds but leaving the pine straw I had applied in the spring, also, having a good cat means I'll not be bothered with voles this year.

I now have four outside cats, last August a thin young black kitty was trying to survive by getting into garbage cans, so what do I do, I feed her of course. About a week later

she brings her three kittens, one kitten was very weak, Baby (the mama cat) was not making enough milk, so now I go buy canned cat food to give her the nutrition she needs. Now with two granddaughters do think I can give any of them away, NOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!, I am pleased to say that I have four healthy cats --- they reward me by bringing me their food to share. The mama cat is teaching them to hunt, the voles, squirrels and bunnies don't have a chance. The mama cat has only brought one bunny home, but countless squirrels and voles.

OVER WINTERING HOSTAS IN NURSERY POTS

It happens to all of us. At some point in our gardening life, we don't get all of our plants planted. Fall comes, big end of season sales, then winter shows up and we still have plants sitting in nursery pots. Not only are you looking at money spent, but you really wanted those hostas..Hostas can be over wintered in pots in a few different ways. As temperatures drop, the plant will start to go dormant. The leaves will die back. Cut off the leaves and discard: don't compost. Be sure to sterilize your tools between plants in a 10% bleach solution to avoid spreading anything contagious. Allow the plants to continue getting the same moisture as the in-ground plants. Don't let them dry out prior to storage as they will need some moisture to get them through the winter. Plants in gallon pots will survive better than in smaller pots due to the increased insulation of the soil around the roots. Soils that are too heavy - clay or peat will hold too much moisture and can cause root rot.

TIP 'EM

If you are overwintering the pots outside and don't have a cold frame, one way is to dig a shallow trench before the ground freezes. After the hostas are dormant, place them in the trench at an angle to keep water from pooling on the surface. They can also be leaned against something like a landscape timber. You will want to keep the pots from thawing and freezing, so a cover of pine straw can be used. Black plastic would cause too much heat and thawing could occur.

BURY 'EM

Dig a hole to bury at least 3/4 of the pot in the ground. Again, a white insulating blanket over the pots and a piece of plywood weighted down over that to keep out extra moisture and critters.

STASH 'EM IN AN UNHEATED BUILDING

An unheated garage, shed or barn works very well for winter hosta storage. In this environment they can be put on shelves or on the floor. Place the pots in the coldest part of the building, such as the north side, to reduce the chance of premature thawing. About mid winter, or if the pots appear very dry, you will need to add some moisture. This can be done by placing a few ice cubes in each pot. The normal winter temperature fluctuations should cause the ice to melt slowly enough to add some moisture without drowning the roots.

SPRING THAW

You will have to be aware of the spring temperatures. If it gets too warm where the plants are being stored, they will prematurely sprout. Then you will end up with pale leaves that will be too tender for outside fluctuating temperatures. Ideally, you should move the pots back outside, or uncover if already outside, prior to their spring thaw so that they wake up slowly and naturally. You should be able to cover up the pots if it rains and when freezing temperatures occur. You don't want ice pooling in the top of the pot.

Compliments of the American Hosta Society

**HOPE TO SEE YOU AT THE LUNCHEON – DECEMBER 3rd
IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND - – JOHNNY AND I WANT TO WISH**

YOU A

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR