

# THE CHATTANOOGA REGIONAL HOSTA SOCIETY

## THE HOSTA CONNECTION

MAY 12, 2012  
12 O'CLOCK  
PICNIC & GARDEN TOUR  
AT  
RUBY SUNDAY

### DIRECTIONS TO RUBY'S

TAKE I-75 south to EXIT 341 Varnell/Tunnel Hill - TURN LEFT go under I-75 Drive EXACTLY 4 MILES - TURN LEFT onto Appalossa Dr --- Ruby's house is First House on the Left. Bring a covered dish and enjoy Bethlehem Gardens.



#### *Notes from the Editor*

*Is it Summer already? I hate dragging the water hose. Last Summer it seems like all I did was drag water hoses, (I'm my irrigation system). Remember Bob Solberg's advice on "if you start watering your hostas in the Spring you will have to keep watering all season long". I did just that – watered, watered, watered, this Spring my hostas jumped out of the ground running, I would almost say they are perfect '**except**' they jumped too soon, I didn't get my snail bait out soon enough so now I've got little holes all over the leaves.*

*I've been playing catch up all Spring, so much needs to be done in the garden right now in past years I'd still be transplanting and planting, too hot and dry for that now. Too bad its not to hot for weeds to grow. Johnny bought me 30 bales of pine straw, which I now have spread. Johnny hasn't had the time to shred up the leaves for my other beds. While we were on vacation the new grass in the front yard died, I thought I had watered everything well enough to last until we came home, lucky my only casualty was the grass.*

*I'm looking forward to the picnic at Ruby's, I love to explore her gardens, and buy hostas. Yes, I enjoy being with friends and good food but I am a HOSTAHOLIC and I have to get my FIX.*

The Bachman Garden & Art Expo on Signal Mountain was fun; Carol, Chuck, Janet, Betty, Tami, Reathel, Ruby, Johnny and I worked. As always the mini's and

giant hostas sold first, Tammy drove her SUV and picked up the hostas the night before, so there were more hostas to sell than when Ruby brings them in her car. Chuck had potted up some Bee Balm to sell and brought two huge Krossa Regal Hostas to sell. Last year Chuck potted up two different kinds of hostas that sold and all the proceeds went into the Treasury. Thank you Chuck.

## **GROWING MINIS**

The miniature hosta craze is sweeping Hostadom, gardeners everywhere are finding that minis are not always the easiest hostas to grow.

There are really two types of miniature hostas, those that have – small genes that keep them small and those that are small because they do not grow very well. Many white-centered minis and some yellow ones fall into this latter category. If you have trouble keeping these little guys alive it is probably not your fault, they are just not vigorous plants.

All minis, by virtue of their small size alone, do have some disadvantages over their larger hosta cousins. They have shorter, and often much smaller in diameter roots than large hostas. Therefore, they can not send their roots deep into the soil where the moisture hides in the dry season. Thus, they need to be watered more frequently, but they also need better drainage, so that the water can get to those little roots easily.

If you water your miniature hostas more often, then you must fertilize them more as well. Many sophisticated mini growers do not fertilize their minis at all, starving them into the smallest size possible, and then wonder why they lose one every now and then. Little hostas need fertilizer too, especially a little bit of liquid fertilizer every few weeks during the growing season. In your good, well drained soil, water should percolate down into the root zone quickly and thoroughly.

Minis would also like a little more light than you probably want to give them. Babying them in deep shade may be loving them to death. Plus, if you are watering and fertilizing more, they will need more light to photosynthesize more, and grow better.

This is leading me to say that minis grown well need their own special place in the garden. Maybe you need a special bed of specially prepared soil with small rocks scattered about to moderate temperatures and retain moisture (a rock garden?). Locate them somewhere safe from surface tree roots that can easily strangle them and steal their water and nutrients; somewhere safe from voles that can devour an entire mini in just on bite. Maybe minis are best grown in containers.

In a container, light, soil, water and fertilizer can all be completely controlled. Voles can be foiled and tree roots cut if they dare to penetrate the holes in the bottom of the pot. In the South, we love containers for all these reasons and for almost all of our hostas. We can, however, just leave them outside in the garden all winter without a care in the world if the container can handle the freezing and thawing. If they are in nursery pots you can sink them "pot in pot" and just pop them out again in the spring. You can lay the pots on their side, they are better off dry, just be sure to put the pots upright before your hostas emerge, or they will be 'goosed neck' plants all next season.

*Reprinted from Midwest Regional Hosta*

*Newsletter Fall 2010*

### **A DIFFERENT TYPE OF PLANT TROUGH**

taken from North American Rock Garden

Society May 2012

Traditional Hypertufa troughs are made of cement. They're heavy. Here is a recipe for a light-weight version that you can make and enhance for natural effects. They can last for several years.

#### Materials

An empty, polystyrene box

A wire brush or other tool to rough up the outside of the box

Optional: hot air gun to slightly melt and round corners and make shapes

One or two colors of tough porch, deck paint (rock colors)

Some sand, grit, pumice, gravel or mortar mix for texture

Process: Scrape and scar the box surface. Round sharp corners and mimic rock surfaces. Paint on one color as an undercoat, then add the second color to give a mottled effect and enhance textures. While paint is still wet, throw sand, grit or pumice onto the box to add texture. Or add a light coat of mortar mix for more of a stone appearance.

Remember to carefully punch drainage holes in the bottom. Stand the trough on a pair of bricks and enjoy.

**THERE WILL BE NO MEETINGS IN JUNE, JULY OR AUGUST. NEXT MEETING WILL**

**BE AT THE BARN NURSERY IN SEPTEMBER ---WATCH FOR YOUR NEWSLETTER**