

THE CHATTANOOGA REGIONAL HOSTA SOCIETY



THE HOSTA CONNECTION

SPECIAL MEETING

AUGUST 4, 2012

MEETING AT 1 P.M.

EAST RIDGE COMMUNITY CENTER
PROGRAM GIVEN BY: ELEANOR CRAIG
OWNER OF FERN RIDGE FARMS



Notes from the Editor

Shirley McMasters

As you see in the heading, Eleanor Craig, owner of Fern Ridge Farms, will be speaking on different varieties of ferns --- She will, also, bring ferns for sale. Eleanor was a vendor at the National Hosta Convention, in Nashville. I purchased a 'ribbon fern', it is very unusual, the ½ inch, fern blade actually looks like a 6 inch dark green ribbon..

I don't know where to start in sharing our experiences at the Convention, it was far better than I imagined. I'll write as the thoughts come to mind but in no certain order.

The Hotel was extremely nice, our bed felt like we were sleeping on a cloud.

The prepaid dinners were very tasty – the wait staff was very efficient in serving.

I had never been to a Hosta Leaf Show; I saw perfect leaves of tiny hostas all the way up to the huge hosta leaves. There were division for hostas in containers and hostas in flower arrangements. I have a hosta wish list that I know I will never be able to fill.

Most of the speakers were interesting, some of them not so much, these speakers spoke on hybridization of hostas. 'Some variegated hostas arise as sports or mutations from other hostas. A green hosta growing happily in one location, sometimes all of a sudden one division may arise different. Other hostas may sport in the tissue culturing process. Tissue culture is a process of reproducing many plants from a few cells of a parent plant. The process of reproducing new plants in nutrient rich solutions makes the probability of mutation increase, and sports occur with variegated leaves. The knowledge of these speakers was unbelievable. All of the speakers had slides of hostas in their programs.

One of the programs, was how long (years) it took to develop and bring a hosta to sale. Another program – WHY - white hostas, yellow or chartreuse colors usually fade to green by the middle of the summer, blue hosta lose their blue color, why some light colors burn out.

There was a program on developing different hosta characteristics – a long narrow leaf, heart shape leaf, round leaf, etc, etc - different ways through hybridizing to achieve all the different colors and variations. The list is very long of sports and seedlings to have come up with so many different varieties of hostas. There is a variety of hostas I was not familiar with - the underside of the hosta leaf is white. (I'll have more about this later) The present trend for the hybridizers is to get a red/purple hosta. Bob Solberg showed us a picture of his latest - a red/purple hosta - the leaves are red but not the veins or stems, it will still be a couple of years before he introduces it. (I'll bring a picture of it to the meeting). Some of the other hybridizes have gotten the red/purple in the stems and veins but not the leaves – they are not ready to introduce these hostas yet. Bob made the statement, “now that every hybridize knows - which hybridize is doing what – trading of seedlings will happen and new hostas will be developed.

Dennis and Therese went to Nashville Wednesday, the vendors had the room packed with plants. Thursday morning, we arrived at 8am, the vendors had sold almost half of their inventory. Bob Solberg had a small/mini hosta called 'Tongue Twister', he had sold out, I spotted one in a container planting he had on display, and asked him to dig it out for me. He laughed, he had sold the whole container it had, 5 mini hostas, the buyer only wanted 'Tongue Twister' but had to purchase the container – to get 'Tongue Twister'.

Dennis lined up two speakers for us, Eleanor Craig and a hosta grower from Alabama, I asked Claudia Walker, past President of Regional Hosta Society to do a program for us. Virginia Gregory – Kocaj agreed to show us pictures of the 2012 Convention, she gave a program for us last year on Hosta Gardens. I'm looking forward to the programs next year. Dennis, Therese, Johnny and I attended the Regional Hosta Society meeting; this was the first time in eleven years that the Chattanooga Hosta Society had a representative present. We four enjoyed each other's company at the dinners and luncheons that were included in the Convention Registration.

There were seven gardens to tour, three on Friday, and four on Saturday. Two of the gardens were so packed with hostas and a few shade loving plants, you could not see the ground. I was surprised to see fifty percent of the hostas in containers and regular nursery pots instead of being planted directly in the ground. In one of these gardens the owner actually planted the nursery pot in the ground, he cut the bottom off the container and left about two inches of the pot above ground. He had lost over 300 hostas to voles several years ago, since he started planting the pot and using containers he hasn't lost a one to the voles.

There were ballots for us to vote for our favorite garden: different classifications were - best single hosta - hostas in a group - hostas best used in the landscape, most unique seedling (only one garden had a seedling marked). The owners of the gardens marked the areas and hostas they wanted us to judge. Several times I saw a grouping of hostas that I liked better than the hostas the garden owners had picked out.

The Convention Gift Hosta 'Delona's Smile', was hybridized by Bob Solberg, it will be a medium size yellow hosta. Johnny and I both received 'Delona's Smile' as well as all the other registered Convention attendees. The hostas were in 4" pots but had a good root system, I've planted these in a container and they are happily growing.

GROWING HOSTAS IN CONTAINERS

Taken from hostapatch.com

Hostas can be successfully grown in containers. Advantages are the plants can be moved around to change the arrangement, and reposition pots to take advantage of bloom times. They also give season long interest with their colorful foliage.

The containers can be anything that will hold soil. The important consideration is that it must have adequate drainage. The size of the container should commensurate with the mature size of the plant. Young plants should be planted in smaller containers. As the plants grow larger, hostas should be transplanted into larger pots, until the ultimate size is reached. Placing a couple inches of Styrofoam peanuts in the bottom of very large containers makes them light in weight, and more portable.

The planting mix should retain moisture, but drain well so as not to rot the plant. At the Hosta Patch, hostas are planted in a commercial soil less mix formulated with peat moss, vermiculite, and per-lite. This mix retains moisture, but also drains enough to allow the roots to get oxygen.

Containerized plants must be watered every day or two in hot weather. It is not necessary to have saucers collect water under the pots. They will also need regular fertilizing, as nutrients quickly leech away with regular watering. Fertilizer can be applied with every watering at a quarter to half the recommended strength or a time release fertilizer can be applied at the beginning of the season.

The plants need a period of dormancy for the winter. Containers should be placed in a location from overhead moisture, or turn the container on its side so the moisture will not collect and make the plants rot. An unheated garage or porch is ideal; the containers should not be allowed to dry out completely either. Check them about once a month; if the soil is dry, a very light watering is all that is needed.

Potted Hostas will begin to grow earlier than plants in the ground, so a periodic check as the weather warms up will be needed. If the plants begin to grow, they must not be placed outside until all danger of frost is past.

Hope to see you Saturday, August 4, at 1pm. We do not have a Hospitality Chair Person, so you can bring snacks if you like, the Hosta Society will furnish cups, plates, napkins, forks and spoons.