



president's letter

Yesterday was the CIHS annual bus trip and what a day we had! I look forward to these trips because it gives me a chance to relax, reflect and get inspired by some incredible gardens! The bus was filled and we had many guests, non-CIHS members, who joined us for the day. The best part of the day for me was at the Klehm Arboretum when we were gathered around the hostas and began asking each other the names of the various hostas and you could just feel the excitement as we oohed and awed over the incredible specimens. Everyone especially loved the *H. Snow Cap* and the *H. fluctuans* "Sagae". Then a guest approached me, appearing somewhat bewildered and said she had just one type of hosta in her garden and that she had no idea that there were so many hosta varieties. She was taken back by our fascination with the hostas. We explained to her that hostas can be very addictive and encouraged her to start collecting them because of their easy growing nature. Today I think about this lady and think that this was me 10 years ago when I was bitten by the hosta bug. I also want to mention some other highlights of the day. Of course the donuts were fresh and delicious and the display gardens looked fabulous at Hornbakers along with their incredible water feature holding the blooming water lilies. Bloomin' Gardens in Sycamore was fascinating to see and I appreciated their re-use of an old brick building housing interesting garden paraphernalia. Lastly, Anderson Gardens is a must see. It is a true Illinois treasure in Rockford. The garden highlights how hostas can be used and everyone commented about the hostas in the water features. The garden just felt good, it has a special serene feel and flow. The garden has wonderful Japanese maples and beautifully designed pathways. It did rain while we were there, but only for a short time. If you have not been to this garden, I encourage you to plan a visit. They also have a new restaurant in their visitor's center that overlooks the gardens. Sue Eckhof did a wonderful job organizing the bus trip this year for us. I want to thank Sue for making it happen!

A big congratulation goes to Carol Koch, Nick Crowley, Bob Monier and the Glovers for winning the Peoria Journal Star Better Earth gardening awards! Great to see these three hosta gardens being recognized!

Both, Kay Dye and Al Kuhlmann also need a big thank you for their work on our CIHS web site. Al Kuhlman is now keeping it updated so be sure to take a look at www.cihshostaclub.org.

Hope to see you at our July meeting at Kathy Allen's garden in Morton!

Golda Ewalt

july meeting

Tuesday, July 15, 6:30 pm
Kathy & Jerry Allen's Garden
467 E. Fernwood, Morton

Nestled under huge trees, the front garden is filled with hostas, and whets your appetite with the promise of things to come. This garden really demonstrates what you can achieve with a standard suburban lot. Nestled under huge trees, the front garden is filled with hostas, and whets your appetite with the promise of things to come. Passing through the gate to the back, one enters a garden exuberantly planted with over 350 hosta cultivars complete with companion plants and a great collection of miniatures hosta. On the other side of the yard, a sun garden is created from a tapestry of perennials, roses and daylilies. This garden has been under construction for about 9 years, ever since the swing set had been removed, the pitching area seeded over, and the area between the pine trees which had been "defended" as a soccer goal is no longer in use. Now the hosta and perennials have become the "sports" of the yard. **Directions:** Take I-74 to I-155. Take the Birchwood exit, and follow Birchwood St. into Morton. Turn right on Main St., go about four blocks, and turn left on Fernwood. Go about four blocks.

Notice: To provide adequate time for viewing Host Gardens, each Garden will be open to visitors ½ hour early at 6:00, while the meeting starts at 6:30.

hosta of the month

H. 'Emerald Ruff Cut' (Anderson 2003) a medium hosta with slightly shiny, oval and tapering, heavily rippled leaves are golden yellow with a dark green margin. It grows somewhat upright forming an attractive cascading mound. Pale lavender flowers in July. It is a sport of the solid green *H. 'Sea Angel Wings'* that was originally sold as *H. 'Emerald Isle'*.

H. 'Fireworks' (Walters Gardens 2001) a small hosta with thick green and white leaves. A new variant from *H. 'Loyalist'*, it features narrow, stiff leaves that stand straight up, and creamy white centers with lush, dark-green borders. Leaves of such structure are sure to offer some slug resistance. It will carry delicate lavender flowers in early summer.

H. 'Grand Canyon' (Petryszyn/Brincka 1995) a large hosta from Olga Petryszyn's Americana Series, it is a stunning upright vase-shaped hosta. A child of 'Sum and Substance' and *H. montana* var. *macrophylla*, the long chartreuse-green leaves have a heavy substance and a ruffled leaf margin.

H. 'Lakeside Beach Captain' (Chastain 2003) is a tetraploid sport of *H. 'Lakeside Shore Master'*, also a Chastain introduction. A focal point or specimen plant, it has thick, blue-green leaves highlighted with a small, creamy yellow central pattern. The 15" tall x 38" wide clumps are topped in late spring with 20" scapes of near white flowers.

CIHS Banquet to feature Tom Micheletti

American Hosta Society president Tom Micheletti of Deer Park, IL, will be the featured speaker at this year's Central Illinois Hosta Society banquet, scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 16, at Kickapoo Creek Winery in Edwards.

Tom's talk/slide presentation will center on the beauty and the diversity of Hostas and has been approved by Monica David, University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener coordinator, as continuing education credit for Master Gardener attendees.

A retired technology teacher, Tom is well-known in Hosta circles nationwide. He is past president of the Midwest Regional Hosta Society and founded the Northern Illinois Hosta Society. In addition, he belongs to the American Hosta Growers Association and sells Hostas mail order from his website (www.hostapatch.com).

For the past 16 years Tom has organized a highly-respected gardening event known as the Winter Scientific Meeting, which is sponsored by the Midwest Regional Hosta Society and held annually in the Chicago area. He currently has more than 800 Hosta varieties in his collection and is a frequent speaker at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Set to begin at 6 p.m., the 2008 CIHS banquet is open to the public. The cost is \$30 for members and \$35 for non-members and includes dinner, the Micheletti program and a very special gift Hosta for each participant. Entrée choices are Black Forest chicken, stuffed pork chop and seared salmon. For details and to make reservations, contact Carol Morrisey via email (camorris99@hotmail.com) or phone (309-203-0845).

2008 meetings & events

July 10-12

Midwest Regional Convention
Schaumburg, Illinois

Tuesday, July 15, 6:30 pm

Kathy & Jerry Allen's Garden
467 E. Fernwood, Morton

Tuesday, August 19, 5:30 pm

Plant Auction
(Note earlier time)
Sue Eckhoff's Garden
11846 Ropp Road, Tremont

Tuesday, September 16, 6:00 pm

(Note earlier time)
Annual Banquet
Speaker: Tom Micheletti, AHS President

officers

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to join:

Central Illinois Hosta Society
\$10/year, form on back cover

Midwest Reg. Hosta Society

\$20/2 years
send dues to:
Pete Postelwaite, Treasurer
21172 Andover Road
Kildeer, IL 60047

American Hosta Society
\$30 individual, \$57/2 years
\$34 family, \$62/2 years
send dues to:
Sandie Markland
AHS Membership Secretary
8702 Pinnacle Rock Court
Lorton, VA 22079-3029

donations & volunteers needed for auction!!!



The Central Illinois Hosta Society is seeking member donations of plants and other garden-related items for next month's auction as well as volunteers to help run this annual fund-raising event, which is set for 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, August 19, at the garden of Sue Eckhoff, 11846 Ropp Road, Tremont.

4 p.m. plant drop-off begins for donations (Hostas, companion plants, garden ornaments, etc.)

4:45 p.m. garden viewing and refreshments

5:30 p.m. business meeting

5:50 p.m. auction starts promptly

Those who wish to donate shade garden and other plants should try to dig and pot them some weeks before the auction so that they'll look their best on August 19. Please label plants and indicate the name of the donor on the tag.

Here are the positions for which CIHS needs volunteers: auctioneers, plant sorters (to decide which plants should go into the auction and which should be put on the fixed price plant sale), clerks to register bidders and to record the winning bids, runners to deliver items to the winning bidders, one or two persons to collect payment from the bidders, auctioneer assistants (to position and hand plants to the auctioneers) and someone to put prices on the plant sale items.

If you're interested in helping with the auction, please **see Carol Morrisey at the July meeting or contact her via email (camorris99@hotmail.com) or phone (263-0845).**

Funds raised at CIHS auctions help finance the annual banquet in September.

the library

If you would like to check out a magazine or book from the library, make out a check in the amount listed next to each book. This will be held as a deposit, which will be returned when the book(s) are returned. One month is generally the checkout time; however, they can be renewed for an additional month. See Ella Maxwell, librarian, at the meetings or call her at 309.444.3758.



Hosta... Q & A

This is a feature in our newsletter; where your gardening questions will be answered as they come to us (Ray, Kay, Ella and Bob) through the mail, email or conversation. Please indicate in the email subject line that it is a garden question and not junk mail and noted below, is some contact information. We hope to hear from you soon

Ray Rodgers	rbrssr@telstar-online.net
Kay Dye	Kdye1@aol.com
Ella Maxwell	ejm601@insightbb.com
Bob Streitmatter	goldaandbob@hotmail.com

Q: Can you eat hosta leaves? I have heard that you can eat them.

A: Yes, you can hosta; both the petioles and the emerging shoots or leaves can be eaten. A hosta salad can be prepared from the petioles. Cut the petioles into 1" sections. Remove the skin and boil slightly so as to not lose the green color or crispness. Toss the petiole sections with a dressing made of sesame paste, salt, vinegar and sugar to taste.

A tempura dish can be prepared by using the young hosta shoots or flower buds. Wash and dry the hosta pieces thoroughly. Dust the pieces with flour and dip into a batter made of 2 egg yolks, 1 cup of water, 1 cup of flour and ½ tsp. of salt. Dip the pieces into hot oil (370 degrees) till golden brown. The crisp hosta fries can be dipped into a curried mayonnaise or dipping sauce of choice.

Q: Are Walnut trees toxic to hostas?

A: No, Ray did a great deal of research, finding a number of lists/articles (list follows) that stated hosta were tolerant of juglone, the chemical walnuts generate. Juglone is produced in the fruit, leaves and branches, and can be excreted from the root system into the soil. The actual concentration in each tree part varies with the season. All species of the walnut family (*Juglandaceae*) produce juglone, including many trees such as English walnut, black walnut, butternut, hickory and pecan. However, black walnuts have the highest concentration of juglone. *This question was a great example of the open forum of discussion that occurs within the Education committee. I (Bob) always assumed hosta were, to some extent, affected; however, after the discussion, I think the limited growth I observed was probably due to root competition and/or fussy slow-growing hosta.*

Plants not impacted by Juglone

Anemone, Aster, Astilbe, Bee Balm, Begonia, Bittersweet, Bloodroot, Calendula, Clematis Coral Bells, Cranesbill, Virginia Creeper, Daffodil, Shasta Daisy, Daylily, Dutchman's Breeches Evening primrose, Fern, Garden Phlox, Goldenrod, Hollyhock, **Hosta**, Hyacinth, Hydrangea, Siberian Iris, Ironweed, Jack-in-the-pulpit, Lamb's Ear, Lilyturf, Lobelia, Lungwort, Mayapple, Morning Glory, Mullein, Phlox, Primrose, Raspberry, Black-eyed susan, Sedum, Siberian squill, Snowdrop, Solomon's Seal, Speedwell, Spiderwort, Spring beauty, St. John's wort, Sunflower, Sweet woodruff, Trillium, Tulip, Violet, Wisteria, Yarrow, Zinnia

Plants damaged by juglone

Apple, Azalea, Birch, Blackberry, Blueberry, Chrysanthemum, Columbine, False Indigo, Forget-me-not, lily, Lily-of-the-valley, Linden, Peony, Pepper, Pine, Potato, Rhododendron, Thyme, Tomato,

Composting, Part 2 The Accessories

Now that you have all those piles of green stuff and brown stuff sitting there, either already in a pile or ready to be mixed, here are some things that you may find useful in your quest for the perfect compost. Keep in mind though, that if you have mixed the pile in the right ratios, eventually you will still get compost. That's why these are "the accessories."

One thing I do think is essential is a good pitch fork. Look for one called a 'compost' or 'manure' fork. It will grab more material either for turning or tossing into the pile.

There are many compost containers on the market. Some are round, rectangular or trapezoidal boxes. These will have a lid on top to add material. Look for a large opening and a hinged lid so it doesn't blow away in the wind. They often have a door on the bottom to remove finished compost that they claim will fall to the bottom. This will work better if you are going to fill it up and let it set for a year or if you use a compost turning tool. This tool consists of a long rod with a T-bar handle on top and hinged wings on the bottom. The wings collapse as you push it into the compost and extend as you pull back.

Continued on page 5

This will take some effort whether pushing or pulling, but it helps to mix and aerate the pile. If you want compost this year, you may want an easier way to remix the contents. A cylindrical compost tumbler will do this just by rotating the drum. Some of these are on stands making it easier to turn, some you can roll around the yard like a big ball. Most of these containers are quite pricey.

A more economical way is to form a round or rectangular enclosure out of small holed, galvanized hardware cloth. Chicken wire is too weak. I have also found these to be good for holding leaves in the fall to use in the spring with the fresh green grass clippings. When you are ready to use the material, just pick the bin up to empty it and move it to a new location. Or, if you really want to be a recycler, get used wooden pallets. These are often found free for the taking. Nail or wire three together, smooth side in, to form a box. You can attach a fourth one to the bottom to elevate and help air circulation or put hardware cloth on the bottom to keep burrowing rodents out. Loosely attach another pallet to the front with some wire. That way it can be removed to add or turn the compost. Three sided boxes can also be made out of concrete or cinder blocks. You can build on additional boxes as needed.

A classic composting system consists of three attached boxes made with removable wooden slates in the front and either wooden slats or galvanized hardware cloth for aeration on the back and ends. Do not use pressure treated lumber, it may contain arsenic. Cedar works well as it is slow to decay. A lid across the top that can be propped open is a plus. Make each bin at least 3 ft square. Start in the first bin with raw materials. Once the bin is filled, turn it into the second bin. Now you can start to refill the first bin with raw material. Turn bin two frequently until finished. Then it goes into bin three to cure. Just keep moving and turning.

There are a few other items that will help in your composting endeavors. A stainless steel compost thermometer with an easy to read dial and a 20" stem will help monitor the compost pile's heat. It should start to heat up in the first few days. If not, and the pile is moist, add more green/nitrogen items. If too dry, add some water. Check again in a few days. The center of the pile should reach 160 degrees F. to kill most weed seed, insects and eggs, and disease organisms.

Compost activator, also called compost starter or compost accelerator, contains billions of

microorganisms and nutrients that speed up the compost pile's process. It may also contain a pH balancer. It will give you finished compost in less time and is especially useful if you need multiple batches, have a lot of yard & kitchen waste or have a short growing season and would like to use the compost this season. A few shovels full of just-finished compost thrown into a newly started batch will also help activate a pile.

Once you start making compost, you will get to know what finished compost looks like. It is usually dark, crumbly and has a deep earthy smell. Here's a scientific method for testing your compost for maturity. SOLVITA makes a COMPOST MATURITY TEST KIT. Compost is placed in the supplied container and a small coated paddle is inserted. Using a patented gel system to capture carbon dioxide and measure ammonia content, it displays in color. After 4 hours you compare the color to a chart to see if it is finished. Unfinished compost can be phototoxic, suppressing plant growth by oxygen deprivation at the root zone and may, as a byproduct, produce volatile organic acids.

One of the simpler and faster devices for distributing finished compost around your yard is a perforated metal compost spreader. A diamond pattern grid (.5" x 1.25") completely encloses the drum unit, breaking up clumpy materials as it tumbles. It has a dual vinyl handle making it easy to grip. The spreader can be pushed and rotated with human power, or pulled by a lawn tractor. Anything that does not get through the grid can be put back into the active compost pile.

Here is an item to make for screening compost to use around your other plants. Make a square frame of 2" x 4" lumber slightly larger than your wheelbarrow or large tub. Cut a piece of small holed hardware cloth that will extend over the edges of the frame enough to nail or staple down. Cut the corners of the hardware cloth at a diagonal in from the corners about 4" so you can bend them down and overlap. Place the screen over the wheelbarrow or tub like a cap. Use a scoop shovel with a straight bottom edge to place a small pile of compost on top of the screen and use the straight edge to scrap across the screen. Whatever doesn't make it through the screen, throw back into the compost bin.

One of the more interesting things I found was a bench made of recycled plastic wood built over a compost bin. Although it looked might aesthetically pleasing in the garden, it did not meet the minimum requirements of being 3 ft deep. **Cont. on page 6**

It may be useful though, for storing finished compost in a convenient place. Compost should always be covered until ready to use so that rainfall does not leach out everything for which you and the microorganisms worked so hard.

Written by **Mary Bardens**, reprinted from the Northwest Indiana Hosta Society newsletter; April and May of 2008 issues

pecan blondies w/browned butter frosting

This is the recipe for the bar cookies served at the June Meeting. Contributed by Connie Zuercher

Bars

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1/2 cup butter softened (I use land o lakes butter)
1 tsp vanilla
2 eggs
1 1/2 cups flour + 2 tbsl
1 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 cup chopped pecans

Frosting

3 tbsl butter
3 cups powdered sugar
1/2 tsp vanilla
2-4 tbsl milk
Pecan halves or chopped pecans for ornament on top of frosting

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a 13x9-inch pan. In a large bowl beat the sugars and butter until light and fluffy. Add 1 tsp vanilla and eggs and blend well. Measure flour and add flour baking powder and salt to the mix and blend well. Stir in 1/2 the pecans. This dough will be thick. Carefully spread in the greased pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 23-33 minutes (in my oven it takes 29), until inserted toothpick in the middle comes out clean. Cool Completely.

Heat 3 tbsl butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat until it turns light golden brown. Be careful not to burn. Remove from heat. Stir in the powdered sugar and vanilla and add milk mixing after each TBL until you get your desired spreading consistency. If you get

it too thin just add a little more powdered sugar. Blend this until smooth. Spread over bars and adorn with additional pecans. Cut into 36 bars (or fewer if you like larger bars) and serve.

Thoughts from "Plant Geek Night" ... New England Flower Show

You might be a plant geek if:

- You can stand 25 ft. away from your favorite foliage plants (hostas, of course) and identify them without labels. How about while driving by them in someone's yard?
- You find the tiny curl at the tip of H. 'Fijubotan' beyond adorable.
- You get goosebumps when you see really rippley piecrust edges on leaves.
- You *can* see the difference in all those gold edged green hostas.
- Really thick substantiated leaves make your knees weak.
- You take overnight trips to other states during the winter to attend one day seminars on your favorite plant.
- The first thing you do at any flower show is to check how many of YOUR favorite plants are in the displays. And are they labeled correctly?
- Your heart sings every time you take your label maker out to add a new tag to your collection.
- Keeping a database of your plants seems only natural.
- They greet you by name at Staples because they know you ran out of label tape again.
- You decide to change 400 labels from white to clear because the white is too harsh against the foliage.
- You think of large foliated hostas as no care shrubs.
- You get nervous after Thanksgiving because all you've gotten in the mail is a bulb catalog.
- Your lawn gets smaller every year. *What lawn?*
- You'd rather spend your money on (insert your favorite plant here) than on chocolate or shoes.

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**submit items for publication
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