



central illinois hosta society  
www.cihshostclub.netfirms.com

september 2008  
volume 14, issue 7

## president's letter

Wow – what an auction! You came, you bid and you bought! You bought \$2,800 worth of plants and garden goodies! Thank you for your contributions to the club! We put this money back into the club to help offset the cost of the bus trip, banquet and other benefits of being a member of the Central Illinois Hosta Society. I want to thank Sue Eckhoff (and her family) for inviting us to her garden and letting us take over the beautiful lake for the auction. It was such a pleasant evening and the lake provided such a tranquil setting as the sun set. I also want to recognize Carol Morrissey for organizing the auction this year. We appreciate all the time she dedicated to making the auction a success. Thanks again Sue and Carol!

I have had a wonderful time with the club this season. I want to thank everyone for supporting the club and especially the board. The board had been great to work with this year. The board really keeps things moving ahead and makes the monthly meetings, trips, auction, banquet, snacks, raffles and education happen. Work for next year has already begun! We are still in need for some volunteers for several board positions. We need to fill the following committees: Ways and Means, Public Relations, Education and Hospitality. Please consider giving me a call if you are interested or say “yes” if asked by a board member to serve on a committee.

Also, it is not too late to sign-up for the banquet (see details in this newsletter). This is our last get together of the year so I hope you will join us for a relaxing dinner and hosta friendships. I know I am enjoying the cooler evenings in the garden and I hope are too! Golda



Mike Weber and his dedicated auction staff

The enthusiastic crowd at the auction

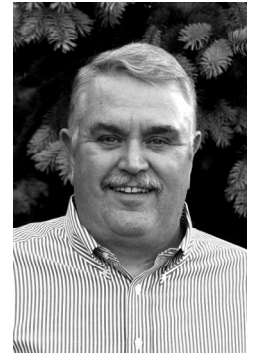


## annual banquet

**Tuesday, September 16, 5:45**  
**(please note earlier time)**

Tom Micheletti, the American Hosta Society President, will present: “The Beauty and Diversity of Hosta”

Kickapoo Creek Winery/Connor Nursery  
6605 N. Smith Road  
Edwards, Illinois  
**5:45 pm** Beer/Wine, cash bar  
**6:30 pm** Dinner  
**7:30 pm** Program



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.

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](http://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. **see page 2**

Tickets cost \$30 for CIHS members and \$35 for non-members. Entrée choices are Black Forest chicken, stuffed pork chop and seared salmon, and a vegetarian dish also will be available. Due to health & insurance standards, food is not allowed to be taken out of the facility. For details and to make reservations, contact Carol Morrissey via email (camorris99@hotmail.com) or by phone (309-263-0845). Every banquet attendee will receive a very special gift Hosta (see page 2 for descriptions), and Tom Micheletti's talk/slide presentation has been approved by Monica David, University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener coordinator, as continuing education credit for Master Gardener attendees.

**Directions:** From Peoria, take I-74 west to exit 82 (Kickapoo/Edwards). Turn left onto Kickapoo-Edwards Road. Travel ¼ mile and turn right onto Smith Road (note winery sign). The entrance to the winery is just past the curve and on the right; watch for the windmill.

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## gift hostas for the 2008 banquet

**H. 'Rootin Tootin'** (Ziarek, NR) [M] This sport of 'Abba Irresistible' has much wider margins than its parent. Somewhat glossy, deep green leaves have a narrow streak through the center that starts out creamy-yellow and quickly turns white. Develops moderate corrugation and the above-average substance helps it hold up better than many white-centered hostas. Pale lavender flowers in mid-summer. Midwest Regional Hosta Society convention plant in 2006 (Milwaukee)

**H. 'Deja Blu'** (Walters Gardens, 2005) [S/M] Intriguing sport from Hosta 'Blue Boy'. The heart-shaped blue-green leaves have a creamy lightning bolt dancing between the margin and the center of the leaf. Margins are greenish yellow to yellow. Soft lavender flowers are produced on 18-20" scapes in early to midsummer

**H. 'Lakeside Masterpiece'** (Chastain, 1998) [M] Intensely blue green lightly wavy ovate leaves with wide creamy white, uneven margin. Dull on top, slightly shiny underneath. Its habit is rather low and spreading with some of the leaves twisting. Pure white tubular flowers in mid-summer.

**H. 'Katsuragawa Beni'** (Japan NR) [S/M] Narrow, shiny green leaves with pointed tips have crimson petioles with the red coming up into the base of each leaf. Deep lavender flowers on 16" scapes make an attractive display in mid to late summer. An exquisite discovery made in the mountains of Japan by Mr. Toshiro Shimizu, this Collector's hosta retailed for \$125 in the 2004 Hosta Finder.

**H. 'Lakeside Zesty Zeno'** (Chastain, 2004) [S/M] Red petioles support variegated leaves of green and yellow. Tubular lavender flowers bloom mid to late summer.

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## welcome new member!!!

Diane Legaspi

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## 2009 meetings & events

Winter Scientific Meeting  
Date: TBA  
Schaumburg, Illinois

AHS National Convention 2009  
June 24-27, 2009  
Lansing, Michigan

Midwest Regional Convention  
June 11-13, 2009  
Champaign, Illinois  
mrhs2009.com

## 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



## 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: Why does my hosta have brown edges and look stressed?**

**A:** Brown edges and yellow leaves could indicate crown rot or crown damage; you can eliminate this option by simply checking for rot in the crown/base of the plant. Since this question was asked in early September, the most obvious explanation is that hostas peak in mid-June and by September, the heat of summer (temperatures of 90 or more degrees are especially stressful), combined with insufficient watering (hostas prefer the equivalent of 1 to 1 1/2 inches of rain each week), will cause hostas to have burnt edges and/or look stressed. Hostas grown in too much sunlight will burn sooner than hostas receiving the proper amount of shade.

### **Q: How should I prepare the soil before planting my hosta?**

It is really dependant upon the condition of your soil. If you are prepping a whole bed, normally one would rototill the soil down 12-18 inches and amend it with sphagnum peat, larger organic material like leaf mould or finely ground bark mulch and some coarse sand. If you are setting out a few plants you can dig and amend individual holes; be generous with the width and allow for ample root growth.

In clay soil, sand alone actually will make the soil harder, stunting root development. The purpose of the larger organic material is to improve aeration of the soil; while the peat aids in water retention. Regarding peat moss, there are a lot of products out there. The baled peat moss is compressed so it is more economical than the fluffy loose form. Some peat moss even contains a mild fertilizer (i.e. Miracle-Gro Enriched Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss) that can help establish your new planting.

It is also recommended that you incorporate some nutrient-rich compost/composted manure/mushroom compost for nitrogen as well as bone meal to provide phosphorous. The nitrogen will promote foliar growth, while the phosphorus promotes root growth, which helps to get the plant established.

The old adage of planting a 50-cent plant in a 5-dollar hole is very true. Soil prep makes a big difference in the long-term health of your garden.

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## slate of nominations

We will be voting at the September meeting for the slate of nominations; however, nominations will be taken from the floor. We are still searching for a couple of the appointed chairmanships; please notify a board member if you are interested in participating.

President: **Golda Ewalt**

Vice President: sets up meetings events and potluck; **Kathy Allen**

Second Vice President: works with V. P. to set up meetings and events; sets up auction and banquet; **Shirley Metz**

Third Vice President: sets up spring symposium, Solberg hosta order & bus trip; **Sue Eckhoff**

Recording Secretary: records and presents meeting minutes; **Carol Morrisey**

Corresponding Secretary: mails thank you notes, cards and other correspondence; **Donna Cothrell**

Treasurer: maintains accounts, pays bills, writes checks; **Dan McConnell**

# About Seed & Hosta

## **Growing Seeds**

Growing Seeds is a simple procedure. All you need to do is research germination requirements for the particular species you wish to grow and then duplicate the needed conditions. Seed from many species, for example Hosta seed, sprout nicely indoors under normal house conditions, with temperatures running 60 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

An important rule that one needs to pay special attention to: your growing medium must be sterile. A pathogenic fungus bacteria virus is present in all outdoor soil. You should not use soil from your garden without sterilization first. Sowing containers and any other materials used with the sowing should also be clean. If you use an unwashed sowing container, which was lying around outside, likely a white mildew (mold) will grow on the soil surface, and when the seeds sprout, plants will rot away (damp off). If you are unsure about sterility within your sowing there is a product called 'No Damp' that can help. A few drops of this chemical in the water you use to wet your soil could make the difference between success or failure.

## **Growing Mediums**

Growing Mediums are available at all Nurseries and it is better to buy these rather than trying to make your own from your garden soil. Three basic soil-less ingredients go into most growing mediums. They are shredded peat moss, vermiculite and perlite. Pro Mix (Trade Mark) is one example of a soil-less mix. The Pro Mix BX formula also contains some slow release fertilizers and a wetting agent. It is a good medium for all round purposes such as sowing and potting.

You can mix your own growing medium using the three basic soilless ingredients mentioned above. Any ratio from 1-1-1 through to 3-2-1 will provide excellent results. It is best to use coarse grades of vermiculite and perlite, with the finely shredded peat moss rather than, fine particles of every ingredient. This does encourage coarser and thicker root development. The finer the growing medium the more the roots tend to get finer and more hair-like. The key to growing healthy plants is to provide for good root development.

The growing mediums described here are soil-less, but if you wish to add a good sterile potting soil to your mixture, this will also provide excellent results.

## **Hosta Seed Germination**

The actual time it takes for seeds to send up sprouts, is known as the Germination Period. This time period varies with different species and cultivars. The Soil Temperature, which the seed sits in during the sprouting process, plays an important role as to how long it will take the seed to sprout or whether the seed will sprout at all. If you have a thermometer in the room where the seed is sown and it shows the air temperature is 70 degrees Fahrenheit, then you can assume, the soil temperature is approximately 60 to 65 degrees. Soil temperatures; tend to run 5 to 10 degrees cooler than the air temperature in a room. In this environment the germination time for hosta seed will be approximately thirteen days, give or take a couple of days. Hosta seed does not require light to assist sprouting; therefore, you can place your sown containers, in a warm area of your house like on top of your refrigerator or TV. On the thirteenth day after sowing, move the sowing under fluorescent lights. If you happen to see sprouts showing and breaking the soil surface before the thirteen day period, then by all means, place the sowing under lights. Something has triggered a quicker sprouting period. It is a good idea to use a driplless bottom tray for your sowing containers to sit in. This prevents water leaking out and also allows for bottom watering. Your sowing containers must have holes in the bottom. This is needed for proper drainage, root-aeration and to facilitate bottom watering.

## **Total Incubation**

Total Incubation is a good idea and provides for no need of watering until the seedlings are sprouted and ready for transplant. Place your sowing container inside a large clear plastic bag sealed air tight. A large Zip-Lock bag works great. Your sowing is then inside a miniature greenhouse. This 'Incubation Chamber' maintains humidity around your sowing and you will not need to water again until seedlings require transplanting. This can be months after sowing or longer if you wish. This "sealed sowing procedure" is rather tricky to do since everything sealed inside the bag must be STERILE and is comparable to Tissue Culture procedures (total sterility). Any fungus virus present in this sealed environment will lead to mildew growth and damp off (plant rot). Using a sterile growing medium and fungicide added to the water used to dampen the medium, produces excellent results! You can even transplant to your garden directly from your sowing containers. This will save transplant hassles and maximize your indoor production.

You cannot grow seedlings in the incubated state indefinitely or until plant out time when you are using a no soil (soil-less) growing medium. The plants will require fertilizer from the two leaf stage onward. You will need to open your mini-greenhouse and mist the plants with water soluble fertilizer. The recommended procedure is to use one quarter strength, water soluble fertilizer, once a week and reseal the sowing again to hold moisture and prevent rapid dry out. Liquid fish formula fertilizers are probably the best to use, since nutrients are readily available through leaf-pore absorption with no leaf-burning effect. Most of the fish fertilizers smell terrible so look for the bottle which says 'perfumed'.

There is not much to look for in studying a monochrome (one colour) first year hosta seedling. There is no point trying to select plants you wish to keep until seedlings are into their second year of growth and/or even maturity (4th year) since the mature seedling will look a lot different than it did in the first/second year.

### **About Sowing Containers**

A product referred to as a "standard greenhouse flat", (measures 11-inches wide, 22-inches in length and about 3-inches deep) is available with or without holes in the bottom. Also available are "plastic sowing tray inserts" having 10 to 20 pre-formed rows to sow seed into. These are made to fit nicely inside the standard greenhouse flat. A clear plastic dome is also available, which fits directly over this type of sowing tray. See your local Nursery for the above products.

Using the dripless flat, with the sowing insert and the clear plastic cover over top provides an excellent incubated method of sowing seed. You can also tape the edges shut "air-tight" after sowing and wetting, using 2-inch wide clear tape, the kind used to seal cardboard boxes. This provides 'Total Incubation' of your sowing and it will not require re-watering again until such time as you decide to remove the cover.

Using shallow soil in a sowing tray, results in sprouting seed-roots reaching the sides and bottom of the sowing tray quickly; and this, results in rapid plant growth above the soil. If, on the other hand, you use a deep sowing container, most of the growing energy will be directed to root growth. You are better off, to sprout seeds in shallow soil, say an inch or two of depth; versus deeper containers, since this provides faster growth of plant tissue above the soil.

### **Growing Plants under Fluorescent Lights**

There are two ways to grow hosta seedlings: 1). Professional Style - To produce plants as quickly as possible. This entails doing anything and everything to maximize growth excellence and sparing no expense. 2). Amateur Style - Not being in any kind of a hurry and being cost effective.

The Professional Hosta Seed Growers use continuous light (no darkness). Light is turned on as soon as sprouts are seen coming through the soil. Lights then run continuously (nonstop) until seedlings are moved to an outdoor environment (greenhouses included). They may use expensive, high intensity light fixtures and/or added incandescent bulbs, to provide full spectrum lighting in conjunction with greenhouses since their objectives are not comparable to the amateur seedling grower. Any hosta seedling can flower seven to eight months later and hence, provide the opportunity for hybridizers to get the next seed generation in a given year. So you can see why this type of seed grower spares no expense.

The Amateurs, generally speaking, just want to start some seedlings as cheaply as possible having no flowering deadlines in mind. They want to grow some starter plants to move outdoors later and let Mother Nature take over. Fluorescent bulbs are good enough and sometimes, these are almost free to obtain. A Photo Period (light: on-off time) can be a 12 hrs on - 12 hrs off. This will sustain adequate growth, producing seedlings for later planting outside.

Here is a trick to maximize light reflection. Purchase some "mirrored foil" to line the sides around your growing area as this will maximize light reflection and contain all light within the growing area. Mirrored Foil can be found at many Hydroponic Shops. Using such "mirror-like reflectors" permits you to set the fluorescent light bulbs, two to three feet above your growing bench, which will triple your growing area. Also, if twelve hours of light is too costly you can drop down to six or eight hours per day. Because all light is contained within the growing area via reflection on the mirrored foil, this provides for adequate growth to start seedlings. The cost of running a four-foot, two-bulb fluorescent-fixture, for twelve hours per day is under five cents. Consider that, if you have a growing area two feet by four feet (eight square feet), you can place four standard greenhouse flats (crosswise) in this space. With each sowing tray containing 1000 seeds (4000 seeds under one fixture), the only cheaper method is sowing seed outdoors.

### **Sowing Seed Directly Outdoor**

Most perennial seed species sown outdoors, when soil temperature is below 42 degrees Fahrenheit, will sprout as soon as the soil temperature becomes warmer in late Spring/early summer. Hosta seedlings sown and sprouted outdoors will grow large enough in the growing season to survive your winter climate. Other perennial seed types, particularly those requiring stratification (freezing) before they will sprout, are particularly good to sow directly outside. This can be done in November, just before the ground freezes, or in early Spring.

Putting a two to three inch layer of peat moss over your garden soil provides a good mulch against weed seed and also provides an excellent germinating base for whatever seed you wish to sow directly outside. An easy method for planting is to run your hoe across the garden bed making a trench about five inches deep. Fill this trench with peat moss, sow your seed and cover with more peat moss. The biggest problem with outdoor sowing is weed seeds also sprout and weeding can be a pain. Otherwise, it's an almost free and easy method of growing hosta seedlings.

### **Hosta Seed Storage and Sowing**

Plastic film cartridge containers are available free from any Film Shop and are ideal for seed storage because they store seeds "air-tight". They hold 1000 to 1500 hosta seeds depending on seed size. These film containers also fit nicely inside metal cookies tins and this provides for double sealed, air tight storage. Place this container inside the FREEZER Compartment of your refrigerator. "Frozen Hosta Seed Will keep for 20 years!" [a Dr. Herb Benedict quotation] IMPORTANT! To prevent 'Freezer Burn' the seed must be inside an air-tight container.

Sowing a full film canister into each standard-sized sowing tray is about the right amount (using sowing flats mentioned above). Average germination (e.g. 33%) will provide three to four hundred plants per tray. When you sow hosta seed, keep in mind that germination from variety to variety is very irregular and there are not many types which provide 80% seed germination. You will not get a plant from every seed. Sprinkle the seed thickly (seeds touching and over top of others) since you will more than likely be getting one plant for every five seeds put down. Folding a thin piece of cardboard and pouring seed into the fold, then tapping it with your fore-finger, is an easy method of sowing.

### **Collecting Your Own Seed**

There are not many seed catalogues which offer hosta seed and, those which do, have not gone to any trouble of storing their hosta seed frozen to preserve/maximize germination. In most cases, the seed will be totally dried out and will have poor germination. The option that is open to hosta growers is to collect your own seed. If you don't cut spent flower stems from your hostas, you will notice in most cases that seed pods result. If left to mature, the pods are usually ripe when frosts start and/or by October. For an avid hosta enthusiast, collecting your own seed becomes even more exciting when you begin to experiment with self and/or cross-pollinating your own plants. Once this has been achieved, the seedling grower has become a hybridizer and making your own new hosta hybrids is the most exciting, challenging and rewarding hosta game of all.

### **Making New Hosta Hybrids**

The Art of Hybridizing Hostas is not too complicated and really is a simple matter, once a few basic 'Genetic Laws' are known and understood. The easiest way to illustrate this required discipline, which will allow you to produce whatever types of offspring you wish, is to look at 'The Benedict Cross' or, as Jim Hawes of Oakland, Maryland calls it, 'The Artist's Palette', (This has no inference to H. 'Artist's Palette', a named hosta released by Bob Kuk). Simply stated the 'Benedict (+) Cross' places Striated leaf types (streaky), in the center of the cross; green leaf types at the very top (North); yellow leaf types at bottom (South); marginal variegation types on the right (East); and center leaf variegated types (medios) on the left (West).

The first 'Genetic Law of Inheritance' is that only Streaky Leaf Pod-Parents Produce Variegated Progeny. This can help save a starting hosta hybridizer many trial and error frustrations. The type of leaf that results in seedlings is decided maternally. That is, the pod parent, not through the pollen factor produces whatever leaf characteristics are inherent within. It should be noted that the other four types illustrated in the 'Benedict Cross' above are Stable Leaf Colors, whereas the striated leaf-types are not. Striated leaf types and seedlings, do eventually stabilize to a monochrome or variegated form as denoted in the 'Benedict Cross'. It is most important for the wanna-be hybridizer to also note that stable pod parents produce only monochrome (one color) seedlings. All four types, illustrated in 'The Benedict Cross' above (all points North, South, West and East) produce mostly green leaf seedlings since the green chromosome is dominant. The odds are very slim, to see a variegated seedling appear from a stable type, but then luck is one of the most important criteria in hybridizing. If, for example, we grow self pollinated seed from hostas 'Great Expectations', 'Paul's Glory', H. montana 'Cho Ko Nishiki', or any other type having center leaf variegation (medios) we will obtain a high percentage of all green leaf offspring, with some yellow-leaf seedlings from the medio factor. All seedlings are monochrome (solid colored) with no variegation present. This genetic principle applies to all margin variegated leaf type Mother plants as well. So, anyone wanting to grow variegated hybrids will have to obtain streaky leaf Breeders and use these as the Mother Plants (pod parents). Only these will produce streaky, variegated and splashed offspring. Using pollen from striated varieties, and applying it onto any stable form, defeats the whole purpose of obtaining variegated offspring, since stable and dominant colors will override the recessive streaky leaf genes and again all progeny will have leaves of one solid color and none of these will be variegated.

### **Methods of Pollination**

The easiest method to pollinate hosts is to let bees do it for you. Some well known hosta hybridizers have resorted to this method. They block plant varieties they want cross-pollinated in close proximity to each other and if they bloom at the same time, bees do a fairly good job of crossing pollen from plant to plant within this block. However, if you want 100% accurate cross-pollination, the only way to do this is to remove the flower petals and pollen sacs (stamens) just before florets open. This removes the landing pad which bees use to enter the floret. In most cases the floret which has its petals cut away, before the flower opens, is not quite ready to receive pollen just yet. This can be done the following day since the chance of bee-pollination has been removed. Going outside in the early morning, say an hour after sunrise, and doing pollination on newly opened florets, is another method of doing crosses. Trying to pollinate in mid-day to late-afternoon is not practical, since the bees have already done the pollination for you. There are all kinds of tricks in hand-crossing and each hybridizer generally has their own method of doing it. Some breeders use tweezers to apply the actual pollen sac from one flower onto another, while others use artist's brushes. It doesn't matter which method one uses, as long as the job gets done.

### **Making Labels Which Last Forever**

It is important to have good labels that last for many years, when working with seedlings. Using plastic labels sold at most Nurseries and writing on these with a waterproof marker is not nearly good enough. Outdoor elements make such a label unreadable fairly quickly. The Sun's rays make the plastic brittle and then they break.

Making long lasting aluminum labels from pieces of house-siding or old window blinds (available cheaply from metal scrap-yard recycling depots), is very cost effective. You can cut aluminum siding into any shape/size you wish quite easily with good metal sheers. Writing on these home made labels can be done with an electric engraver costing under twenty dollars. Even pop and/or beer cans, which are made of very thin aluminum, are easy to cut with good scissors and this is better than plastic labels and more permanent. You can scratch your information right into the metal with a nail or better yet, go buy yourself a carbide tip 'Scriber' available for around five dollars. Using aluminum labels; also means, they will not rust and in view of the written information being cut right into the metal, such a label will probably last forever.

### **Collecting, Drying & Cleaning Hosta Seed**

This process is not difficult. When you see pods on the flower scapes, the first question that comes to mind is, "When will these pods be ripe enough to harvest the seed?" Generally speaking, it takes at least three months and sometimes a little longer depending on variety/environment. The best way to know when to collect the seed is to watch the bottom pods on the flower scape. When the pods start changing color towards brown, they are becoming ripe. When the pod has become brownish black in color and the pod starts to split open, the seed is ripe and should be collected. If left the pods will split open and the seed will fall on the ground and be lost. A hint for an easy way to collect ripe seed is to take a pair of panty hose, cut the legs off, then roll the stocking over the pod scape and tie it at the bottom. When the seed pods split open, the seed will be collected inside the hose. Another common collecting method is to watch the seed and when you see the bottom pods are beginning to split open, you can snip off at least the bottom half of all pods on the scape. Some people

prefer to cut off the whole spike, drop this inside brown paper bag and place this in a cool dry room (like garage) to dry out completely. A faster method to have seed dried, cleaned and in storage within 5 days, is first to cut the seed-pods off the scape with scissors and then take them right inside the house. Using regular sheets of paper with edges folded up box-like, put the collected pods inside and because it's warm and dry inside the house the pods will split open within two/three days. Dump these into a box and shake to empty seeds out of pods. Empty seeds into a spaghetti strainer, that has quarter inch holes, this results in the seed falling through and pods remaining behind. When the seed has been removed from the chaff, it can be dumped again into a flour strainer, shaken lightly and in this case, dirt and dust is removed from the seed. The fungus virus which leads to mold and dampening off is likely contained within the dust/dirt mixed in with the seed; therefore straining this away seems like a good practice to follow. At this point the seed should be fairly clean and dry. Remember, only dark brown to black seed is viable. Discard any other color of seed. At this point, the seed is ready for sowing. If you don't plan to sow immediately, put the seed in a plastic film canister as mentioned earlier, label, seal it and store it.

It is exciting to sow seed and watch new life sprout forth. Hostas, being the true perennials they are, makes this pleasure a lasting experience as they develop new characteristics each succeeding year until the hybrid reaches maturity (4 years). Calling this a 'Thrill of a Lifetime' may be too far-fetched but it's surely somewhere near the top of my list of 'HAVING FUN'

**By Bill Nash** and published in the Newsletter of the Ontario Hosta Society