



Shady Business

*Newsletter of Potomac Hosta Club, Inc.
Volume 22, Number 3, July 2008*

President's Message

Welcome summer – Gardening requires a lot of water - most of it from perspiration. David Hobson www.gardenhumor.com

Talk about the heat we had an early round of it during the plant sale at River Farm. The club did very well this year. This is due to all the great volunteers. I want to thank Jay Aldhizer, Susan Boland, Eleanora Byrne, Sherley Channing, Mike Fitzgibbon, Elizabeth Grenfell, Jim Hedrick, Juliana Hilt, Alma Kasulaitis, Sandie Markland, Marjie Morris, Patty Myler, Karen O'Meara, Wayne Orchard, Billie Trump and Taffy Turner. And last but not least, Kevin Walek for selecting the plants, working with Bob Solberg for delivery, watering every day, setting up/taking down and managing the cash box during the entire sale.

Our most recent activity was the open garden tours arranged by Alma Kasulaitis. Again talk about the heat, but we had viewers. Those that melted in the heat or thunderstorm and did not go into DC to see Patty Myler's garden missed an exquisite one. With my garden on display I did not get to go to the gardens myself but have made arrangements to get into DC soon. Shelly McAllister had about 30 visitors and enjoyed all the questions and those that took pictures. I unfortunately did not hear back from Peg Bier but was told that those who visited were surprised how large her property is. Jim Barth shared his knowledge on succulents and had plants for sale and had about 19 guests. I also want to thank Eleanora Byrne for showing her garden as well.

The next club activity is **Hosta Bingo** and what is Hosta Bingo? See page 2 for details. **Attention Maryland members: This event is on your side of the Potomac.** And you can thank Shelly McAllister for making the arrangements with Behnke Nursery.

On a sad note Bonnie Ruetenik's mother passed on June 18th while visiting the family for the Eagle Ceremony and Graduation of Bonnie's oldest son. The family will return to Virginia from Ohio early in July.

Have a safe and healthy start to summer and I hope to see you at HOSTA Bingo.

Susan Hedrick

Officers & Directors

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Hosta Bingo!

How do you play? The rules are the same as regular BINGO, only substituting the word HOSTA. Bonnie's husband Ched made these great cards using the word H O S T A in place of bingo. In the column S for example words like slugs, show and sagae are used. And I bet you cannot guess what the prizes are, yes – hostas!

At this writing, some of the possible hosta prizes will be The Shining, Prairie Sky, King of Spades, Journey's End, and Sum Total.

The event will be a potluck affair, **so bring a dish to share.** In order to play you need to be a current club member or you can join when you when you come. New members are always welcome. Dues are still \$10.00 for one year and \$25.00 for three.

Come to Behnke Nursery on **Sunday, July 20th from 1:00 to 3:00 PM.** We'll be upstairs of the Dawn Rose building. Park in the regular customer parking lot and any employee will be able to point you in the right direction. Our game is fun and educational!

Worried about fertilizing your hostas? If you are like me, you never know when, what, or how to fertilize your hostas. The Potomac Hosta Club's good friend, Bob Solberg, of Green Hill Hostas, Chapel Hill, NC, has graciously provided the information I've been seeking, and I hope all of you find it just as useful. *The Editor*

“What kind of fertilizer do you use?”

*Courtesy of Bob Solberg,
Green Hill Hostas*

Whenever I give a talk to a hosta group, the question always comes up, “What kind of fertilizer do you use.” I'm never quite sure if they believe that growers like me have some kind of magic plant food that we use to grow our hostas bigger and better or that if they really want to know what, when and how to fertilize their hostas.

In the garden hostas need light, water, and nutrients for healthy growth. Any

fertilization program must take all these as well as soil type in to account and balance the needs of the hosta. If you water a lot you will need to fertilize more often during the season as watering leaches nitrogen away from the plant (and/or garden). If your garden is very shady over fertilization will not necessarily produce bigger hostas because of the lack of light. Sandy soils will leach nutrients faster than clay soils. Get to know your garden.

There are organic and inorganic fertilizers. Both contain the same nutrients (chemicals) but they come from different sources. At the cellular level hostas “see” these nutrients identically. Organic fertilizers tend to have lower analysis numbers than inorganic ones and thus tend to burn less but you will need to apply them in larger amounts to apply the same amount of nutrients, making them often more expensive in time and money. They may also attract rodents (code word, voles) since several of the materials used as sources of nitrogen in organic fertilizers like cottonseed meal and alfalfa meal are used as animal feeds. Manure is a good cheap organic fertilizer that should not burn if properly composted.

Both types of fertilizers come as a liquid feed, a granular and a slow release. Liquid fertilizer, Peter's 20-20-20, Miracle-Gro, Fish Emulsion, etc., can be used as a drench into the soil or sprayed on the leaves only as a foliar spray. (If this is the only type of fertilizer you use then a drench is more effective.) Liquid fertilizer needs to be applied to hostas at least once every two weeks during the growing season if not weekly since it remains in the root zone for only a short period of time.

Standard inorganic granular fertilizers like 10-10-10 are quite inexpensive and remain in the garden 4-6 weeks depending on the amount of rainfall. Thus two to three applications are necessary, beginning as the hostas emerge and ending when their growth slows in the heat of summer. Beware! Formulations with a high percentage of urea will release their nitrogen in a short period of time in periods of high rainfall and at best be washed from the garden or at worst burn your plants.

Slow release fertilizers like Osmocote and Nutricote release nutrients over time dependent on temperature and rainfall and have the advantage of only needing to be applied once a year. They come in a variety of formulations with hostas preferring a nitrogen number of 18-21. Choose a time of release, 3 months to 9 months that matches the active growing season for your hostas. Many bagged organic fertilizers release their nitrogen slowly also and can be treated as slow release fertilizers and applied just once a year.

Which fertilizer you choose probably has more to do with you than your hostas. What kind of gardener you are and how often you want to feed your hostas? If you enjoy preparing snacks for your hostas and want to shower them with tender loving care, then liquid fertilizers once a week during the growing season is the way for you to go. If you are a lazy gardener like me or one just pressed for time, then you should choose a 9 month slow release formula and fertilize once a year when your hostas first start emerging from their winter's nap. The important thing is to have nutrients available when your hostas are actively growing, from emergence to fall.

Probably the best way to fertilize is a combination of the two. Apply a organic or inorganic slow release fertilizer in early spring. Then supplement this with foliar applications of a high nitrogen liquid fertilizer with Epsom Salts (18-24 nitrogen) maybe twice, a couple of weeks apart while the hostas are growing at their most rapid rate. For us that is around the first and fiftieth of May. An application or two of 10-10-10 liquid fertilizer can also be applied in August when the hostas make their "little flush" of new foliage, especially if all the slow release nitrogen has been released by high summer temperatures and rainfall. This diet is sure to fatten up your hostas.

What fertilizer do we use in here in the nursery? We grow all our hostas in containers, so we can control as much as possible the environment in which we grow our hostas.

Currently, we are using a slow release "Nutricote" product sold by Florikan that has been blended with some soluble urea and magnesium. It is actually three fertilizers in one. Since we want nitrogen available from day one for our newly planted liners, there is some soluble nitrogen for the first week or two. Then some 10-10-10 like fertilizer with magnesium for the second and third weeks and then in the third week the Nutricote kicks in. The Nutricote works great in regions of the country that have hot summers, releasing its nutrients evenly into the fall. Our formulation is 14-5-10 and because we would like the nitrogen number to be up near 20 we apply the fertilizer at the "high" recommended rate rather than the normal rate.

We like this fertilizer so much that we now sell 20 pound buckets of it here at the nursery under our own private label. It is called "Green Hill Hosta Fertilizer" and we are now licensed as a fertilizer manufacturer in North Carolina. Sorry the law does not allow us to ship our fertilizer to other states but you can legally come to the nursery, pick it up, (with a few new hostas to boot), and take it back home. Our local customers keep coming back for more!

Tips to remember:

1. Use a foliage feed as a supplemental feed especially for magnesium (Epsom salts 50ppm) and trace elements when your hostas are actively making new leaves.
2. Hosta roots do not grow during the winter. They stop growing when the plant goes dormant and begin only after the soil has warmed in the spring. New roots are not made until after the first flush of foliage has unfurled. Winter fertilization for added root growth is unnecessary.
3. You can test your soil throughout the season to measure the available nutrients in the soil. It may be more fun to test your hosta leaves for their nutrient content. Hosta leaves can be tested by most State Labs to determine the amount of nutrients that actually are available in the plant not just in the soil.

Hope to see everyone at Hosta Bingo!
Sunday, 20 July, from 1:00 to 3:00 P.M.
Upstairs in the Dawn Rose Building
Behnke's Nursery,
11300 Baltimore Avenue, Beltsville, Maryland

Potomac Hosta Club, Inc.
9122 John Way
Fairfax Station, VA 22039-3042



2008 Hosta Bingo Information Inside

The Potomac Hosta Club, **Inc**

Hosta

H	O	S	T	A
Hosta				
	Ops Hosta			
		Free		
			T. Rex Hosta	
				Abby Hosta

Bingo

At

Behnke Nurseries

11300 Baltimore Ave.

Beltsville, MD

July 20th From 1:00 - 3:00pm

Please bring a dish to share -

Drinks Provided

General Directions to Behnke Nurseries Beltsville, MD

From DC / Arlington area:

- Take the I-395 North toward WASHINGTON.
- Merge onto I-395 North via EXIT 170A on the LEFT toward WASHINGTON (Crossing into DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA). 10.6 mi
- Take US-1 North toward DOWNTOWN. 1.1 mi
- Stay STRAIGHT to go onto 14TH Street NW. 0.7 mi
- Turn RIGHT onto K Street NW/ US-29. 0.3 mi
- Turn LEFT onto 11TH Street NW/ US-29. 0.6 mi
- Turn RIGHT onto RHODE ISLAND Avenue NW/ US-29 North. Continue to follow RHODE ISLAND Avenue NW (Crossing into MARYLAND). 4.0 mi
- Enter next roundabout and take 3rd exit onto US-1 North. 8.1 mi
- *End at 11300 Baltimore Avenue Beltsville, MD 20705

From Fairfax/Burke area:

- Take the CAPITAL BELTWAY/ I-495 North ramp toward ROCKVILLE.
- Merge onto I-495 North/ CAPITAL BELTWAY toward I-495 North (Crossing into MARYLAND) 27.4
- Take the US-1/ BALTIMORE Avenue exit, EXIT 25B-A, toward COLLEGE PARK/ LAUREL 0.8 mi
- Keep LEFT at the fork in the ramp. 0.2 mi
- Keep RIGHT at the fork in the ramp. 0.2 mi
- Turn SLIGHT RIGHT onto US-1/ BALTIMORE Avenue. 1.9 mi
- *End at 11300 Baltimore Avenue Beltsville, MD 20705

From Alexandria/East Fairfax Co. area

- Merge onto I-495 East/I-95 North/CAPITAL BELTWAY toward BALTIMORE 26.9 mi
- Take the US-1 exit, EXIT 25, toward BALTIMORE AVE/LAUREL/COLLEGE PARK.0.3 mi
- Turn RIGHT onto US-1/BALTIMORE Avenue. 1.7 mi
- *End at 11300 Baltimore Ave Beltsville, MD 20705

From Baltimore MD area

- Merge onto I-95 South via the exit on the LEFT toward WASHINGTON. 24.1 mi
- Merge onto POWDER MILL Road/MD-212 East via EXIT 29A toward BELTSVILLE 1.6 mi
- Turn LEFT onto ODELL Road 0.5 mi
- Turn RIGHT onto BALTIMORE Avenue/US-1 0.3 05mi
- *End at 11300 Baltimore Ave Beltsville, MD 207