

# Hosta Horizons

newsletter of the  
*Russ O'Harra Hosta Society*  
est. 1993 [www.rohs.org](http://www.rohs.org)

June 2012

## New Member Program

The ROHS New Member Program is in full swing this spring and summer. Any new member joining ROHS will receive a Gift Card with a value of \$12 that is redeemable toward the purchase of a hosta with any participating Vendor. For more details about the program, visit [www.rohs.org](http://www.rohs.org) and click on 'New Member Program' on the home page. Then click on 'Vendors' to learn about the 8 businesses – all owned by ROHS members – that are supporting the program.

**Bedwell Gardens, Flying Frog Farms, Granny T's Garden, Holland Drive Gardens, Kat's Garden, Lincoln View Farm, Piney Ridge Greenhouse, and Skycrest Gardens.**

**Thank You!**

## President's Message:

*"Gardening Grows the Spirit"* 

### Spring Is Summer

*The gardens have exploded into visions of loveliness after withstanding frost and freezing, terrible winds, and hail three times now - but who's counting? Orioles began serenading me in the gardens last week. I quickly welcomed them with a small dish of grape jelly. Barn swallows have taken up their usual residence under our deck and the twittering begins. Those little birds dive bomb our cats and are very vocal about not wanting cats under their nest. So it's finally official - spring is here. And the weeds know it too. I've spent many hours weeding on my hands and knees recently. Really isn't meditating in the garden so very close to praying? Maybe that's what makes gardening so soothing and peaceful.*

The **"Ted E. Davidson Memorial Scholarship"** established by the Russ O'Hara Hosta Society has become a reality. Reldon has signed our official agreement with DMACC. See the article in this edition.

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# Hosta Horizons

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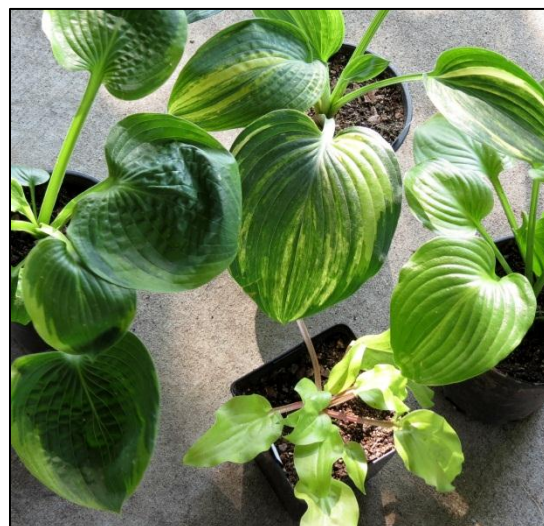
## MISSION STATEMENT:

The Russ O'Harra Hosta Society is an educational society open to all those interested in the genus *Hosta*. Its purpose is to promote the growing and enjoyment of hostas including their use in landscape design and the cultivation and development of new cultivars. The goals of the Society shall be in keeping with those of the American Hosta Society.

The Kincaid Gardens "Grow Your Rewards" code is **HOSTA-ROHS**. For details, check out their website at [www.kincaidgarens.com](http://www.kincaidgarens.com).

## Green Hill Auction Donation

After learning about the ROHS summer auction plans, Green Hill Hosta Farm owners, Bob and Nancy Solberg, very generously donated four plants for our auction.



Clockwise from top: the rare 'Frost Giant' streaked, and three 2012 Green Hill introductions - 'Doubled Up' (the tetraploid form of *Hosta plantaginea*), 'Mango Salsa', and 'Sugar Snap' (the dark green centered sport of the yellow gold, fragrant 'Sweet Susan').

## President's Message:

### *"Gardening Grows the Spirit"*

#### Spring Is Summer

(Continued from page 1)

Soon the AHS National Hosta Convention will happen in Nashville, TN. I know some ROHS members are attending. ROHS will once again be sponsoring the Artistic Design Award at the event. An artist in Pella, Bob Andersen, is designing a special vase with hosta leaves swirling around it. I haven't seen it yet, but his wife described it for me. I'll try to get pictures and post them on the ROHS website and the ROHS Facebook page. I had gotten a vase from Potter Bob and then, in a later conversation, he said if he had known what it was for he would have made one with hostas. And I said, "Hey, we've got time!" So the award/vase will travel to Tennessee with Reldon.

Unfortunately, I have to report that the historical documents that Deb Crabb was storing after her term as ROHS Historian were destroyed when her basement flooded. David Dettmann served as Historian after Deb so recent years documents are saved. Currently we do not have anyone serving as ROHS Historian. We have discussed with the website and our expanded newsletters maybe the position of Historian is not so critical, but it would be nice to have extra pictures and documentation available for historical reference. If you would like to serve as Historian please let Herman or Helen Kopitzke or Gary or Kathy Hoard know. They are serving as our Nominating Committee for the election of officers to be held at our 2012 Fall meeting.

Rob Mortko, the "Hosta Guy" of Made in the Shade Nursery, Olathe, KS, wants to talk to ROHS again and see his friends around Des Moines. I accepted his offer to speak to our group in the Spring of 2013. He is tentatively planning to present "Tissue Culture for Dummies". He is speaking on that topic at the Midwest Region Hosta Convention this summer so if you are in attendance there, maybe skip it and catch him speaking to ROHS next spring.

[www.hostaguy.com](http://www.hostaguy.com)

I am so pleased with our ROHS member's pledge to the "Building A Dream In The Country" project fund. I am foreseeing maybe the best plant auction to ever be facilitated by ROHS. I know I am already walking around the gardens wondering what plants are good enough to donate and what plants I have that others might enjoy as much as I do. And it's getting to be time to dig 'em up and pot 'em up so they will be hale and hardy on auction day. **All checks will need to be made out directly to "Building A Dream In The Country".**

Please invite friends, neighbors, relatives, and other garden clubs to join us on June 24<sup>th</sup> for our event. Many clubs like to go on garden tours and would really enjoy the tour and plant auction. Thank you so much to all of you who stepped up to welcome us as guest into your gardens! Any of us that have ever had our gardens on tour know how time consuming and how much work it is to get ready for company. Eve Vanden Broek, Kenn Outzen and Dean Koob, and our executive committee have put a lot of effort into planning this event.

*And thank you to all members for your continued commitment and support of the Russ O'Harra Hosta Society. You all are the best! Each of us has our own special talents and unique attributes we can share within our group. I especially have enjoyed laughter at our meetings, and the fun games, and, of course, the door prizes. Lisa Swanson and Donna Miller really did a very nice job of hosting our Spring meeting even though we were all nearly blown away down there and certain roads were closed due to flash flooding. However, it is a bit difficult to be in command of Mother Nature. Hopefully, she will choose to be kind to us on June 24<sup>th</sup>. See you all then.*

#### Hosta is the Friendship Plant

### *"Gardening Grows the Spirit"*

MM

Marvelous Marlys





Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life.

For many of us who frequent the internet, this icon and phrase is a familiar sight seen every day – usually several times a day. Click on it and enter the world of instant communication – with family and friends or.. friends of friends or.. friends of friends of friends.. or people from anywhere in the world who share a common interest.

The “six degrees of separation” theory espoused by the Broadway play and movie in the early 1990s still existed as only a tantalizing idea to most of us just a few years ago. Now it’s a reality for anyone with a computer or smartphone and an internet connection. The world is truly at our fingertips. And Facebook is free – with no costs and no data limits.

The Russ O’Harra Hosta Society has stepped into that world of unlimited possibilities with its own Facebook page. The page is being utilized to communicate and chronicle club activities and to generate awareness for our New Member Program and the businesses owned by ROHS members that are supporting the program. Many of the eight businesses have their own Facebook pages and have linked with the ROHS page.

To date, photo albums and short articles on the Spring meeting and the Clean Up Day at Fred and Audra Wilson’s gardens have been added to the ROHS timeline. Brief profiles and photo albums for each of the Vendors supporting the New Member program are being added also. Next on the agenda is promotion of the Summer Tour and Auction.

The ROHS Facebook page is accessible through the Facebook homepage or by the link on the homepage of the ROHS website.

[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) or [www.rohs.org](http://www.rohs.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Russ-OHarra-Hosta-Society/241087079260617>

## 2012 Dates to Remember

Sunday, June 3

**Dubuque Hosta Festival**

Dubuque Arboretum

Dubuque, IA

Saturday, June 9

**Hosta Seed Growers Competition and Picnic**

Land of the Giants Hosta Farm

Milton, WI

[Hosta Seed Growers Forum](#)

June 13 - 16

**AHS National Convention**

Nashville, TN

[2012 AHS National Convention](#)

Sunday, June 24 - 8 AM – 4 PM

**ROHS Summer Tour and Auction**

Roland, Jewell, and Ames area

July 12 – 14

**Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention**

Rochester, MN

[2012 Midwest Regional Hosta Society Convention and Tour](#)

Sunday, October 14 - Noon to 5 PM

**ROHS Fall Meeting**

Iowa Arboretum,

Rural Madrid, IA

<http://www.iowaarboretum.org/>

Speaker: **Bob Solberg**

## Correction

Marlys writes that the photo and info in the Spring newsletter about her favorite "little red digger that I use all the time" was not the right one - it was of a larger sized trowel. "My favorite digger is the 50s Wilcox 9" All-Pro Digging Trowel which is excellent for cultivating plants and flowers in pots, planters,

and other confined areas. I use it for all my general weeding chores. It's 16 gauge stainless steel, 1&1/2" wide, 9"

long, and weighs only 4 ounces, and is very durable. I have had mine for many years, and it's still my favorite hand digger. I have bought several and given as gifts to friends and family over the years also. I am mentioning this as ROHS member Diana Bedwell sells these fine tools, and she had someone want the one that was written about in our newsletter, and due to the misprint the person did not get to purchase the correct product."



# ROHS Summer Tour

## Greg & Sue Olson

The Olsons have lived in Roland for 35 years on their 'pie-shaped' property. Their garden was begun many years ago after purchasing the empty lot to the north and planting a windbreak of concolor firs. Next came their first perennial bed, then a pond, and they are still adding, changing, and expanding today. Although Greg and Sue have never given the gardens a name they are open to suggestions.



**View of the manicured conifer garden bordering the front of the Olson home.**

As their trees matured and the gardens became more shaded, they discovered hosta and began collecting in 2005 after being 'surprised by all the unique shapes, sizes, and color combinations'.

With over 500 hostas in their collection, they have too many to choose just one favorite, but the Olsons 'especially like the vase shaped hostas, hostas with leaves of substance, and those minis are so much fun and versatile in displays and miniature gardens'. A four tiered octagonal planter in their back yard displays over 50 of their small and mini hostas.

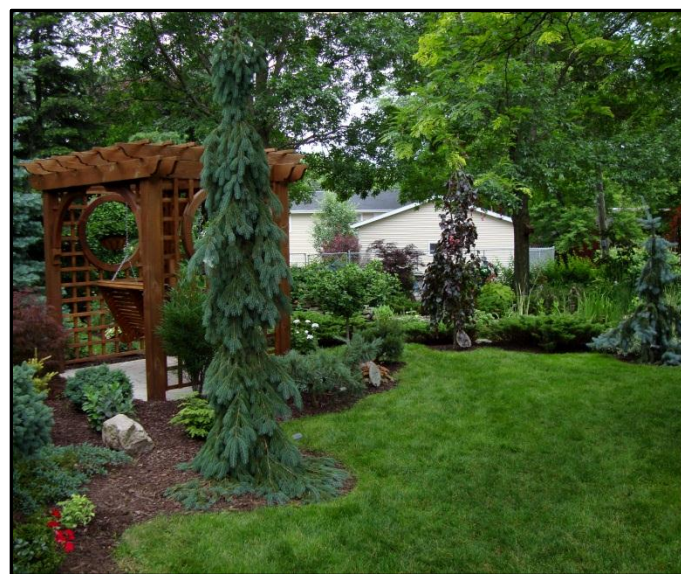
The Olson's other garden club affiliations reflect their gardening interests: Central Iowa Water Garden Association, American Conifer Society, and Story County Master Gardeners. They have hosted garden tours for each group, and their garden was featured on the American Conifer Society Tour in June 2011. They enjoy 'sharing and learning from others' and touring other gardens.

The Olsons wrote this about their gardens for the American Conifer Society convention last year:

*"We have included many sights and sounds of nature in our yard that has created a peaceful and tranquil garden setting. The conifers have added unique texture and form among the numerous hostas, grasses, and perennials. There are four water features with several points of interest including a waterfall, three tier fountain, Tuscan vase fountain, accent lighting, fog, sprinklers, and koi fish. A pergola with swing was just added for pond gazing and enjoying the gardens. Our dream vacation was to Oahu and Maui and it was paradise! Now we keep busy creating our own garden paradise."*

Wanting something 'different and unique', the Olsons built a planter and filled it with tropical and shade plants. 'The tropicals thrived from the indirect sun and summer heat!' Since the success of that project they have removed several junipers and are currently in the process of building two more planters behind their house.

Hosta growers and other hosta collectors have been the Olsons' best resource in learning about hostas. If they had a chance to start their garden over again, they say they would do one thing differently: not plant under soft maple trees.



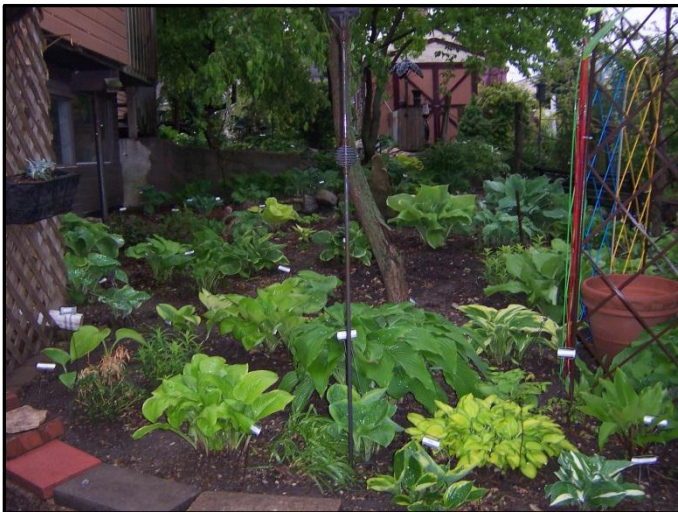
**The Olson's pergola with swing makes a relaxing viewing spot in the gardens.**  
Photos courtesy of Greg & Sue Olson

# ROHS Summer Tour

## Rainbow Botanical Gardens

Kenn Outzen & Dean Koob

Kenn and Dean established Rainbow Botanical Gardens on their 80' x 110' lot in Jewell in 2001, but their hosta collection was begun many years earlier in 1983. Hostas gave 'the ability to have lots of color without blooms'. Over the years, their hosta collection has expanded to between 600 and 700 varieties.



Hostas in the Outzen & Koob garden

Photos courtesy of Kenn Outzen & Dean Koob

In addition to hostas, Rainbow Botanical Gardens feature several other collections including a Dwarf Conifer collection of about 200 plants. Their most unusual collection features Colocasia, Alocasia, Xanthosoma, and Remusatia (Elephant Ears) along with about eight varieties of Banana plants all planted in the garden. Some of the Bananas reach well over 12 feet tall by the time frost hits. These plants have been in the garden since it was begun 11 years ago giving it a tropical flavor not often seen in Iowa gardens. Another distinctive garden feature is the 4300 gallon pond fed by two streams. With all of these elements, it's not surprising that Kenn and Dean say that their yard is too small. Last year they removed one pond and rearranged parts of the garden. Future plans include vertical gardens and more rearranging with some plants being eliminated.

The ROHS is the only club they belong to and they enjoy 'sharing and learning how other people garden' with club members. Books are another resource to learn more about hosta.



Wooden walkway bordering part of the garden

Asked what changes they would make if they had to start their garden over again, the response was emphatic: 'Start with a larger yard!'

They welcome garden visitors any time. Just give a call ahead to (515) 827-9911 or send an email to them at [kdgardens@q.com](mailto:kdgardens@q.com).

## 2012 MRHS Convention Information

*You're invited to participate in "Operation Hosta" hosted by Shades of Green Hosta Society of SE MN July 12-14, 2012. We're excited to host the 2012 MRHS Convention at the Ramada Hotel and Canadian Honker Convention Center in Rochester, MN. We have the cure for your hosta addiction! Join other hostaholics from Region 5 and beyond to tour our finest hosta gardens, view an exciting leaf show, shop our premier hosta vendors, participate in a lively hosta auction, and enjoy our hostatality for a convention to be remembered.*

*The registration deadline is June 7 (late registration fee required after that) – so please send in your registrations now and make your reservations soon. You can register online with a credit card – follow the MRHS convention links at [www.soghs.org](http://www.soghs.org) or [www.midwesthostasociety.org](http://www.midwesthostasociety.org).*

**Operation Hosta + You = Fun for All**

**2012 MRHS Convention Co-Chairs,  
Cindy Tomashek and June Stoehr**

# ROHS Summer Tour

## Skycrest Gardens

Tom & Marilyn Kenney

Tom and Marilyn Kenney have lived on their ¾ acre lot for 35 years and have gardened for 'at least 25 years'. Marilyn says they 'started with perennials and then added Hostas!' Skycrest Gardens is so-named because the Kenneys live in one of the six Skycrest Subdivisions.

Marilyn doesn't remember the year she began collecting hosta, but she found the variety of leaf colors and textures appealing. And the fact that hostas are 'pretty much maintenance free'.



**A pleasing combination of Astilbe, Clematis, and Hosta**  
Photos courtesy of Marilyn Kenney

*Hosta montana* 'Aureomarginata' is a favorite 'because it's one of the first to emerge in spring and stands out with its bright yellow edge'.

Tom and Marilyn have between 250 – 300 hostas in their gardens in combination with other perennials, and they have four water garden features as well.

The Kenneys are charter members of the Russ O'Harra Hosta Society, and their garden was one of the tour gardens for the 2004 AHS National Convention held in Des Moines. Many remember their colorful gardens highlighted by two enormous clumps of delphinium at peak bloom.

Marilyn enjoys 'talking with others about their gardening challenges' and visits various websites and talks to ROHS members and others to learn

more about hostas.

Asked what changes they might make with a chance to start their garden again, Marilyn replied, 'Adding more shade trees and not gardening on such a large scale'.



**One of four water features at Skycrest Gardens**



## It's Official!

The Ted E. Davidson Memorial Scholarship voted on by the ROHS at the Fall 2011 meeting has been officially established. The \$250 scholarship will be given yearly to a Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) student attending the Ankeny campus in either the Landscaping or Greenhouse programs of the Horticulture Department. The scholarship will go into effect in the Fall of 2012.

Thanks go to Randall J. Vos, Horticulture Program Chair and Tara Connolly, Executive Director, DMACC Foundation for their assistance in setting up the scholarship.



**Reldon Ramsey presents the check establishing the Ted E. Davidson Memorial Scholarship to DMACC Foundation Executive Director, Tara Connolly.**

# ROHS Summer Tour

## Lincoln View Farm

Nancy & Robert Briggs

Lincoln View Farm has a Boone address, but it is actually closer to Ames and is located just 2 miles north of Highway 30 and 1 mile west of R38 – the Boone/Story County line. Nancy and her husband, Robert, have resided at their 10 acre homestead for '30 years and few regrets'. The working farm comprises another 57 acres.

The name Nancy gave her garden and business is also the name long associated with the farm. The name was 'duly recorded for the fee of \$1.00 by the State of Iowa on December 11, 1915, for the owner Perry Sawyer who had recently purchased the farm from John L. Goepfinger'. The name is derived from the old Lincoln Highway which adjoined the property - with an easement for widening - when it ran between Ontario (west Ames) and Jordan.

Both Nancy and Bob were raised in families which maintained both vegetable and fruit gardens large enough to serve their needs year-round. They continued 'the habit' when they lived in Ames before moving to their small farm. Nancy received formal training in Horticulture at Iowa State University and Bob trained in Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine. 'As time passed, our interests shifted towards gardens of a more ornamental nature.' The plant that Nancy and Bob are fondest of is a ponytail palm Bob purchased as a small, economical gift over 30 years ago. Nurtured by Nancy for over three decades, it is now a very large specimen.

Nancy's hosta collecting began in 1980 when their 60 year-old crabapple tree needed a focal point. 'Hosta 'Honeybells' made a very nice ring around the tree! We came to believe that few (if any) plants in our climate can match the diversity, versatility, beauty, and easy maintenance of the hosta. The math seems pretty simple.'

A 'favorite' hosta isn't easy for many of us to name, and Nancy is no exception. Of the approximately

650 hostas in her gardens, she was able to narrow it down to five. 'Like so many things in life, there can be no favorite. We are human, though, and several hold a special standing: 'Christmas Cookies'; 'Blueberry Muffin'; 'Guardian Angel'; 'Liberty'; and 'Tootie Mae'. If pressed to pick but one, it would most likely be 'Liberty' with its' pleasing wide gold edges and ability to stand out in a grouping of other hostas.'

### Distinguishing Garden Features:

'Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of our gardens is the ponds. A koi pond is part of an interconnected constellation of ponds totaling 15,000 gallons capacity, including a garden pond with hardy lilies, Thalia, sweet flag, and cattail. A small settling pond, typical of modern koi ponds, is planted in water hyacinth which enjoys the water flow and fertility of such condition. Water returns to the koi pond through a short stream and two short waterfalls, and through a separate upflow gravel filter planted in bare root cattail, lizard's tail,



and hosta. Nearby is a lotus pond, which for the first time this year features only 'Mrs. Perry Slocum' as she is so much more beautiful and vigorous to our eyes than her old pond-mate 'Perry's Giant Sunburst'. A separate more formal garden pond 19' by 29' was built in a somewhat sunnier location to better fulfill the needs of tropical lilies and, sometimes, Victoria lilies.

'A large brick patio winds from an all-season greenhouse, by a bog garden and the koi pond, past a lattice shadehouse for potted perennials, to

**(Continued on next page)**



the garden pond and another lattice shadehouse planted in perennials. The bog garden is a true bog, albeit one designed with pond liner and filled with peat and chicken grit, planted in pitcher plants, bog (grass) orchids, and sundews.

'Apple orchards have replaced sheep pasture on our farm and around 50 varieties of predominantly antique and traditional cider varieties grace the grounds here. Pear, peach, cherry, medlar, quince, blueberry, raspberry, and strawberry round out the fruit plantings. Across the creek is a 1 acre farm pond and small guest cabin. This year, after many years without such a feature, the farm pond is graced by a nesting pair of Canada geese.

'Multiple perennial gardens have expanded across the farmstead over the years and now extend into the woods north and west of the ponds and greenhouse, three sides of the residence, and across the driveway adjacent to the vegetable garden. Aside from the beautiful and obligatory hosta and companion perennials, these gardens feature an array of rustic art such as rusty metal moose, elk, and deer, old farm machinery, concrete turtles, frogs, squirrels, mushrooms, a 1-ton concrete bear, and a late 1800's horse drawn Western road grader. New just last year is a couple hundred feet of hand-made cedar picket fence which visually separates and enhances the perennial gardens northwest of the greenhouse complex from the rest of the woods and farm. It is here in this large shady garden which we hope to host this year's ROHS luncheon and auction.'

#### **Garden Constraints and Challenges:**

'The rural countryside is host to strong winds, many deer, raccoon, and rabbits galore. Plants such as redbud which do very nicely in urban locations seem to require careful placement in rural locations presumably due to desiccating winter winds. The deer are not shy and will readily enter the enclosed shade houses for their dining pleasure. And who would have thought that ponds need deer protection, that deer readily distinguish hardy lilies from tropicals and the pads of red-blooming varieties from the white ones? Heuchera are utterly destroyed by rabbits. Conifers are terrific for polishing antlers. Freshly-planted items of all kinds are sought by raccoon, perhaps for the

easy-digging the sites provide. There is little else that can match the feeling provided by bare-root plants wilting in the morning sun next to holes meticulously planted the day before. For critical spots and repeat offenses, we've found that motion-activated sprinklers can provide quick relief over limited areas. We haven't quite come to terms with the Japanese beetles, though.

'Surprisingly, one of our perceived constraints is that of limited space. We now must use care in selecting plants that there is available space or that other plants can be displaced by new ones.'



Photos courtesy of Nancy Briggs

#### **Future Garden Plans:**

'The gardens here have evolved over a period of many years, as have our specific interests. One thing leads to another, and soon your garden is extensive. Long-term plans, at least for us, are more akin to yearning - such as last year's picket fence project which spawned from years living without a classic picket fence; or several years ago when the walk to the farm pond was too long and we needed a pond closer to the house; or when a pile of used greenhouse panels suddenly became available, and we, therefore, urgently needed a greenhouse - but then, who wouldn't? Perhaps excessive planning will only lead you to where you think you should go. Chance brings opportunity unknown, albeit with some associated risk.

'Our future garden plans are modest: A perennial bed near the site of this year's luncheon needs enlargement. We have a fresh pile of rusty parts from an old John Deere combine to incorporate

**(Continued on page 10)**

(Continued from page 9)

into garden art. The house once had a covered porch which was converted to living space; we need a porch so we might better enjoy the gardens in the moments we are not toiling in them! We need a bigger pile of rocks so we might construct a stone wall adjacent the greenhouse; we need an old wire corn crib so we might construct a gazebo with climbing plants. Of course, hardscape projects present new opportunities for pleasing new softscape endeavor!

**Regarding a gardening mentor:**

'A mentor can be a wonderful thing, but our success and failures at Lincoln View Farm are entirely attributable to our own sometimes foolish volition.'

**Is there anything you can't grow but would like to?**

'We'd absolutely love to be able to grow and fruit an apple banana. A monkey puzzle tree in the ground would be nice.'

In addition to the ROHS, Nancy and Bob are members of the American Hosta Society and the Iowa Arboretum. They enjoy the organizations for the horticultural knowledge they gain through them. Nancy has found the AHS and its informative *The Hosta Journal* to be the best resource on hostas.

**If you had the opportunity to start your garden over again, what changes would you make?**

'Control of weeds on the site at least a year in advance would be intelligent, but who among us has that kind of patience? Better drainage under the vegetable garden and specific drainage for stone fruits would be nice. We enjoy the process, though, and periodic change is relatively welcome.'



Leaf detail of 'Frost Giant' streaked: the stuff that hosta dreams - and bidding wars - are made of...



## 2012 MRHS Convention

**Plan on attending the 2012 Midwest Convention in Rochester, MN July 12, 13 and 14**

**The theme for the 2012 Midwest Region Hosta Convention is "Operation Hosta".**

Visit our website to see our promotional video, convention schedule, convention gift hosta – 'Candy Kisses', registration information, tour gardens, and much more. [2012 MRHS Convention](#)

The registration fee includes three meals (Friday dinner, Saturday box lunch, Saturday banquet), convention gift hosta, handbook, auction, vendors, hosta leaf show, Saturday garden tours, keynote speaker: Don Engebretson (The Renegade Gardener), speakers - Don Dean, Rob Mortko, and Robert Solberg, Judges Clinic I, and Hospitality Room Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

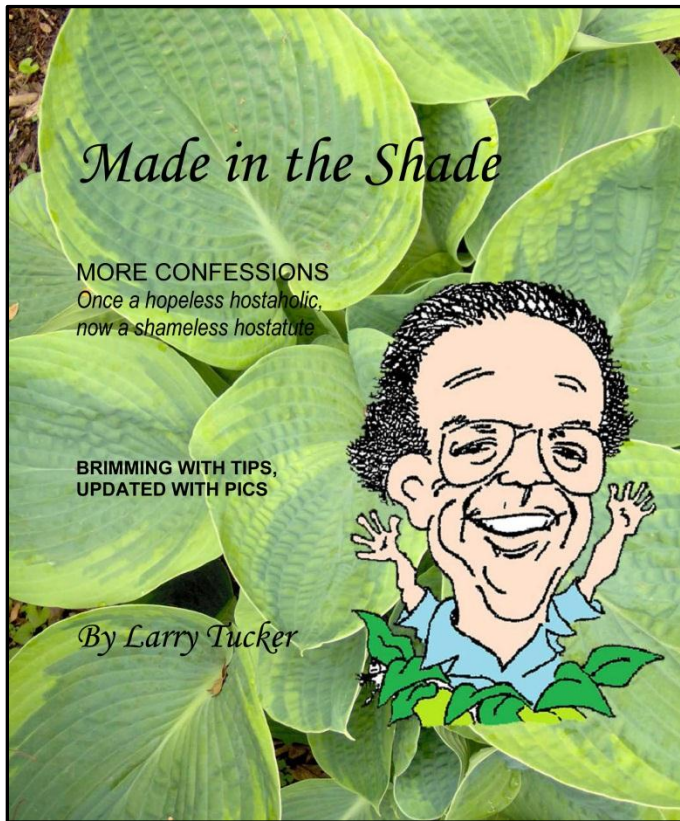
There will be an optional garden picnic on Thursday evening, July 12<sup>th</sup> at Camp Creek Farm (Mike and Cindy Tomashek) near Preston, MN, in the heart of southeast Minnesota bluff country. The evening includes a BBQ picnic, hosta gardens and a barn renovated into a remarkable house to tour and enjoy.

Vendors are Green Hill Farm, Inc. (Robert M. Solberg), Jack's Plants (Jack Barta), Made in the Shade Gardens (Rob Mortko), Naylor Creek Nursery (Gary Lindheimer), Silvers-Elbert Nursery (Bill Silvers), and In the Country Garden & Gifts (Josh Spece).

**See you in Rochester for the best MRHS convention ever!**

**Hosted by: *Shades of Green Hosta Society (SOGHS) of Southeastern MN***

The registration form for the MRHS convention in printable .pdf form was emailed to all ROHS members with valid email addresses on May 10, 2012.



Larry Tucker's *Made in the Shade* book is back by popular demand! This second edition of his adventures and advice, wit and wisdom will help you nurture plants, recognize yourself and maintain your sanity. It's brimming with 24 more chapters, hosta tips, color covers and pictures. Revenue again is destined for the Memphis Botanic Garden's Hosta Trail, an American Hosta Society National Display Garden. Here's what a few of your hosta friends are saying:

**"Good garden writers have a special talent, often combining rich vocabulary with wit and solid information. Larry shows he knows hostas and gardening, has a passion for life and a great marriage. Read this smorgasbord one bite at a time or swallow it whole — after the gardening is done!"**

**Mary Arnberg, Bridgewater, MA,  
New England Hosta Society**

**"It doesn't matter if you have never seen a farm or you were raised in Florida, Larry's verbal picture of life with hostas and Shari (his wife of two score and more) comes alive in humorous anecdotes. Grab a cup of coffee or a martini, ease back in your La-Z-Boy and prepare for his hilarious second-edition *Made in the Shade*."**

**Doug Beilstein, Mansfield, OH,  
American Hosta Society President**

**"Larry has proven once again that you can't 'mistake 'tuckered out' for dormancy", that he is "rarely at a loss for words — or weeds" and "in tough times, seniors are survivors". This is a book to be savored and enjoyed!"**

**Roberta Chopko, Boonton, NJ,  
Tri-State Hosta Society**

**What a great read! It would be fun to be a fly on the wall at Camp Granada because Larry and Shari are delightfully nuts. Larry has distilled many years of happy marriage and gardening into his book. It's like popping in on the Tuckers and having a good chat.**

**Oscar Cross, Ash Grove, MO,  
Hilltop Farm nurseryman**

**"Made in the Shade could be titled Made You Smile. It is a must-have book for addicted hosta collectors, though it will appeal to anyone who gardens or has a passion for plants. Filled with anecdotes and Tuckerisms, Made in the Shade is a great companion for a rainy day when you need a smile."**

**Jan Everson, Troy, MI,  
Michigan Hosta Society**

**"Larry's book is as entertaining as it is educational. His confessions about life's lessons in the hosta garden generate many a laugh for readers. Our club was fortunate to buy the last copies of his first edition. I highly recommend this second edition."**

**Ray Rodgers, Hanna City, IL,  
Central Illinois Hosta Society**

**"These stories make me smile and chuckle because I can relate all too well to Larry's colorful antics. He weaves good horticultural advice into his tales so seamlessly that you don't realize you're learning something while you laugh."**

**Mary Schwartzbauer, Hastings, MN,  
former AHS president**

**"Larry is a real storyteller! It's a treat to read his adventures with Shari, which always have a humorous twist. Whether about hostas, fertilizer or garden art, these essays are enough to make you laugh or cry. We have all been there!"**

**Claudia Walker, Alpharetta, GA,  
former Dixie Region director**

Larry's book can be purchased at Mid-South Hosta Society activities for \$15 or by mail for \$18. Make checks payable to Mid-South Hosta Society (with notation *Made in the Shade*) and send orders to **Larry Tucker, 2927 Geoffrey Drive, Southaven, MS 38672**. Hosta la vista!

# Hosta Travels with Renaldo: Hosta College 2012

**“Livin’ the Hosta Life” with Reldon Ramsey**

It seems the oil companies know when I plan to head east to Piqua, OH and Hosta College. Gas prices began rising the week before for the second year. It’s a conspiracy. They know.

Linda Port joined me again for the trek across Illinois and Indiana in the third week of March – the week ‘summer’ really began in 2012. We were amazed to see so many flowers already in bloom. I didn’t want to, but at Linda’s suggestion, I turned on the AC not far into Indiana.

Upon arriving at our motel we encountered a trio of past and present AHS Presidents and part of the Minnesota delegation. Once at the technical college where Hosta College is held each year, we discovered that the college had been renamed and a major remodel was underway.

The main Hosta College component affected was Vending. Previously it had been easily accessed – just inside the door. This year in order to reach it you **really** had to want to get there. Lots of walking.. and walking.. and when it seemed like you should be there.. you walked a little farther – all the way to the end of the building. And it’s a long building. Bev and Dave Stegeman told me it was faster to go through the automotive shop – as long as it was light enough not to fall into the pit. They were right.

I’d just headed down the hallway when I ran into Joan and Herbie Altman. Joan chastised me for not saying hello earlier. *“But Joan – I just **GOT here! I haven’t even seen you until now.**”* Love her! So good to see them both again.

If you happened to be walking with friends to Vending, you had long conversations that you might not have otherwise had. (I did with the gals who are hosting the MRHS convention in Rochester.) And once you finally reached your destination, you didn’t just wander off to check out raffle items as in years past.

I finally did head back down the hallway to the auction where bidding was hot and seating was limited. I ended up leaning against the wall by Bob Kuk who kept me entertained with old-time

hosta trivia and lore. That was a kick!

My Saturday morning began with two Bob Solberg classes with insights into the production of hostas and the commercial aspects of ‘Hostas in Holland’ that Bob had gleaned from his trip with Nancy to the continent last summer.

Dave Stegeman entertained Chris Wilson (co-owner of Hallson Gardens in SE Michigan) and me with several hosta stories during lunch.

After lunch, hosta hybridizer and AHS President, Doug Beilstein - part of the Fraternal Order of the Seedy Fellows or FOoSF – gave a pictorial show and commentary featuring hosta introductions from each of the group’s nine members. (Visit <http://foosf.com/>)

My final two classes - ‘Advanced Hybridizing’ and ‘Ask Bob’ - were again with Bob Solberg. Both in the same smaller, crowded room, and while discussions in each were good, the noise from the hallway necessitated the door being kept closed and the unseasonal warmth in the building wore most of us - including Bob – down in the last class. We were all in need of a nap.

Once out of the stuffy room and moving again, I was reinvigorated and headed back to Vending for one last look around, and I got in on the raffle drawings. Facebook friend, Carolyn Schaffner, Lee Coates, and I thoroughly enjoyed our opportunity to heckle Roger Kinchen when his name was drawn with a hearty chorus of **“He ALWAYS wins!”**

I wandered back outside and discovered Doug Beilstein, Chris Wilson, and Linda Port enjoying the beautiful afternoon as they discussed HVX and the AHS’s next round of HVX testing.

Saturday evening after the banquet, Linda and I joined Joanna Kovalscik (aka Jojo) and Paul Lenhard in hospitality. We shared a hilarious evening that none of us will likely forget as we added to our arsenal of catch-phrases with the new classic: **‘That’s SO 77 seconds ago’**. I laughed so hard I thought my head would explode.

After the traditional Sunday morning breakfast and goodbyes, we headed west still in summer-like temps with the AC on all the way. Along Highway 30 in northern Indiana at least one lawn was being mowed and the forsythia was in full bloom - the day after St. Patrick’s Day.

# ROHS Summer Tour

## Driving Directions

### Garden #1: Kenn Outzen & Dean Koob

Rainbow Botanical Gardens  
548 East Lane, Jewell, Iowa

### Garden #2: Greg & Sue Olsen

202 Duea Circle, Roland, Iowa

### Garden #3: Marilyn & Tom Kenney

Skycrest Gardens  
243 Dave Circle, Ames, Iowa

### Garden #4: Nancy Briggs

Lincoln View Farm  
1071 X Avenue, Boone, Iowa

**Plants will be for sale at some gardens.**

**It's the big day ... the 2012 ROHS Summer Tour!** Before you put the pedal to the metal, remember to take one last look at the checklist. Seat belt securely fastened, and you're ready to go.

This year you can choose which garden to visit first, either Garden #1 in Jewell or Garden #2 in Roland. Either way, the start time is 8 AM. **The directions provided are from Jewell - the garden furthest north - to Roland to Ames to Boone.** Note there will be a couple of gravel roads getting to Nancy's just outside Ames, our final destination, but for the most part your travels will take you down paved highways and in-town streets. The mileage noted in parenthesis is the APPROXIMATE distance you will travel to the next turn or the garden destination; SD = Short Distance. For your reference, the distance between each garden is approximately 20 to 25 minutes. Lastly, along the route there are plenty of locations to make a pit stop and a porta-potty will be available at Nancy's.

But wait! If four gardens aren't enough, there's an alternate garden stop on the way to Nancy Brigg's Lincoln View Farm. It's roughly 3 miles from Skycrest Gardens (Garden #3) in Ames. Pam Maurer will welcome you to **Evergreen Gardens**, a retail nursery specializing in rare and unusual garden conifers, rock garden and alpine plants.

First, Jewell is north of Ames, but south of Highway 20; is located on Highway 69 which turns into Main Street in town; East Lane is one block east of Main Street; turn east on Anderson Street to East Lane. If travelling from I-35, take Exit 133. Go west on Highway 175/330<sup>th</sup> Street to Jewell. East Lane is the first street. Turn **left**.

### From Rainbow Gardens to Greg & Sue Olsen's:

1. Head north towards Edwards Street (SD)
2. Turn **right** onto IA-175/330<sup>th</sup> Street (3.5 mi)
3. Merge onto I-35 south towards Des Moines (10 mi)
4. Take Exit 123 toward Roland/McCallsburg (SD)
5. Turn **left** onto 130<sup>th</sup> St/County Rd E18 (Turns into W. Maple Street) (3.5 mi)

6. Turn **right** onto Duea Circle (SD)

**Destination: 202 Duea Circle** is on the **left** (cul de sac)

### From Greg & Sue Olsen's to Skycrest Gardens:

1. Head north out of the cul de sac (SD)
2. Turn **left** onto County Rd E18/W. Maple Street (5.7 mi)
3. Turn **left** onto US-69 (6.5 mi)
4. Turn **left** onto Arrasmith Trail (SD)

**Note:** Do **NOT** take Arrasmith Trail to the right – **STAY LEFT**

5. Take the 3<sup>rd</sup> **left** to stay on Arrasmith Trail (0.5 mi) (You will pass Skycrest Drive; go to next street)
6. Turn **left** to stay on Arrasmith Trail (SD)
7. Take the 1<sup>st</sup> **left** onto Hansen Road (SD)
8. Continue on to Dave Circle (SD)

**Destination: 243 Dave Circle** is on the **right** (cul de sac)

**NOTE:** *If you'd like to visit Evergreen Gardens, you can visit on your way to Nancy's, otherwise you may visit after our event has concluded. If you do not want to visit, skip the Alternate Garden directions and follow the directions to Nancy Briggs' Lincoln View Farm. Keep in mind that lunch will be served at noon.*

### ALTERNATE GARDEN:

#### **From Skycrest Gardens to Evergreen Gardens:**

1. Head northeast out of the cul de sac (SD)
2. Turn **right** onto Hansen Road (SD)
3. Turn **right** onto Arrasmith Trail to US-69 (SD)
4. Turn **right** onto US-69/Grand Avenue (0.5 mi)
5. Turn **left** onto W. 190<sup>th</sup> Street (2 mi)
6. Turn **right** onto 520<sup>th</sup> Avenue/George Washington Carver Avenue (SD)

**Destination: 6036 George Washington Carver Avenue** is on the **right**

#### From Skycrest Gardens to Lincoln View Farm:

1. Head northeast out of the cul de sac (SD)
2. Turn **right** onto Hansen Road (SD)
3. Turn **right** onto Arrasmith Trail to US-69 (SD)
4. Turn **right** onto US-69/Grand Avenue (0.5 mi)
5. Turn **left** onto W. 190<sup>th</sup> Street (2 mi)
6. Turn **left** onto 520<sup>th</sup> Avenue/George Washington Carver Avenue (0.5 mi)
7. Take the 1<sup>st</sup> **right** on to Cameron School Road (2 mi)
8. Turn **left** onto Y Avenue/County Rd 38 (1.5 mi)
9. Turn **right** onto 210<sup>th</sup> Street (1 mi)
10. Turn **right** onto X Avenue (short distance)

**Destination: 1071 X Avenue** is on the **left**

# On the Road Again

**HOSTA VERSION** by **Eve Vanden Broek**

For the love of hosta we're on the road again.  
We marked our calendars long ago and the day is  
finally here.

The ROHS Summer Tour is about visiting with our  
hosta friends

And we just can't wait to get on the road again.

On the road again.

Goin' to Iowa towns that we may have never  
been

Seein' gardens that we may never see again

We just can't wait to see the great wonders of  
Garden #1.

On the road again.

Like a band of garden gnomes we travel the  
country byways

We're those crazy hostaholics on the way to  
discover Garden #2.

With pen in hand we'll note the must-haves and  
vow to buy them all.

And then we're back on the road again.

We just can't wait to see what's planted at  
Garden #3.

The Summer Tour is about finding something  
new

And we can't wait to get on the road again.

On the road again.

Like a band of garden gnomes we'll travel the  
country gravel to see what's new

Declaring that at Garden #4 we'll outbid our  
neighbor for the choice hosta in store

And our way is on the road again.

On the road again ...



## Checklist for ROHS Summer Tour:

- ✓ June 2012 Hosta Horizons w/Tour  
Directions & Hosta Name Game
- ✓ Lawn Chair
- ✓ Hosta/Plant Donation(s) \*
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Hat
- ✓ Sunscreen
- ✓ Bottled water
- ✓ Mosquito Repellent
- ✓ Umbrella/Rain Jacket (if rain is  
predicted)
- ✓ Checkbook for hosta purchases
- ✓ Notebook and Pen
- ✓ Hand Sanitizer
- ✓ Cell Phone

**\*Auction plants will be checked in at  
Nancy Briggs' Lincoln View Farm.**

Remember - plants **MUST** be labeled.

### ROHS Summer Tour – LUNCH

This year's lunch will be catered by Hickory Park of Ames. We will have a selection of smoked meats: sliced beef, ham, and turkey along with three side dishes and assorted dessert bars. A vegetarian sub sandwich will also be available (please specify vegetarian on your check). Water and an assortment of sodas will be provided. The cost is **\$12.00 per person**. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee a lunch without advance payment. Please make your check payable to ROHS and mail to David Dettmann **by Friday, June 15.**

**David Dettmann  
122 Blue Gill Court  
Pella, IA 50219**

# The Hosta Name Game

Mark Zilis noted in his book, The Hostapedia, “A good name helps sell a plant, at least for a year or two.” Isn’t that the truth? How many of you have purchased a hosta solely for the name? Did it carry your own name? Did it fit perfectly into your themed garden? Yes, with over 5000 varieties, there are some interestingly named hostas! In fact, how hostas are named is a topic encompassing roughly 10 pages in the 10 lb. book!

While visiting **Jewell** and **Roland** on the **2012 Summer Tour**, try your hand at filling in the blanks using the category clue provided (in order) and/or a specific location in each town to find the correct word which is used in the name of a hosta. Then name a hosta using the word, or a variation of the word, that you put in the blank. There will be a hosta name for every word you fill in and *there may be more than one name associated with the ‘hosta’*. Wonderful prizes are in store for those who come up with correct answers.

Who wants an example? Here you go:

Welcome to Jewell, Iowa, formerly known as Jewell Junction, the second largest town in Hamilton County. The town’s slogan is: “A gem in a friendly setting.”

**Category clues:** gems; U.S. state

**Hosta:** Jewel of the Nile; Christmas Jewel / Iowa Hawkeye; Iowa Moon

Ready? OK. Let’s get started!

## JEWELL, IOWA

1. It is Sunday, \_\_\_\_\_ and you’re nearing \_\_\_\_\_ Garden on \_\_\_\_\_ Lane. You got up so early you didn’t have much time to get ready or go to church. But wait, you just passed \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Fellowship Church. You go inside, put on your \_\_\_\_\_ and say a \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ for a beautiful day and safe travels.

**Category clues:** Month; number; weather; direction; religious; religious, religious; religious

**Hosta:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. If your hobby involves a needle, a trip down Main Street to \_\_\_\_\_ Shop is a must. Following a fair amount of time admiring the prints and colors and having spent hundreds of dollars, you’ll want to meander to \_\_\_\_\_ Café for a piece of \_\_\_\_\_ pie and a \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Category clues:** land; plant; hobby; first name; food; object; drink

**Hosta:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## ROLAND, IOWA

3. The small \_\_\_\_\_ of Roland is in Story \_\_\_\_\_ and is of \_\_\_\_\_ heritage (Scandinavian). It’s where Greg and \_\_\_\_\_ Olsen have made their home. In 1856, Roland’s pioneers built the first dwellings of logs from the timber along the Skunk River. The coming of the Iowa Central \_\_\_\_\_ in 1881 was a big boost for the town.

**Category clues:** places; places; nationality; name; occupation

(Continued on next page)

Hosta: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. A trip down Main Street is a quick one but you know the “Rolanders” are proud of their country as evidenced by the flags flying. The \_\_\_\_\_ Legion may not be open for a drink but you’ve got more gardens to see this \_\_\_\_\_. Back in the car you drive back into the \_\_\_\_\_ on the way to \_\_\_\_\_’s.

Category clues: nationality; time; places; name

Hosta: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. White!

The December edition of *Hosta Horizons* included the announcement of the engagement of Marie Rahman of Wisconsin to ROHS member, Jeff White, of Waterloo.

The couple were married at their new home near Parkersburg on Friday, May 11, 2012.

Marie’s bouquet featured iris and fern fronds from their new gardens and an entire streaked hosta seedling. The seedling is from another of Jeff’s seedlings that he named ‘Twitterpated’ because that was the way he felt around Marie when they first started dating.

## Congratulations, Jeff and Marie!



‘Amazing Love’ is the name Trudy Van Wyk has given this seedling. It honors the early relationship of Marie Rahman and Jeff White. It is a seedling from seeds Jeff shared with Trudy from his ‘Imagine’ – a plant he purchased at auction from Mary Chastain. Photo courtesy of Trudy Van Wyk



Photos courtesy of Jeff White



# Hosta College 2012

## Bob Solberg: “Hostas in Holland”

(Note: This article combines information from Bob Solberg’s first Hosta College class “Hostas in Holland” with his second class on the same subject for commercial hosta growers.)

In August 2011, Bob and Nancy Solberg visited England and Holland on a business trip and visited a number of nurseries in Holland that produce plants for the U.S. market.

*“We think of Holland as the source of bare root hostas. We think of the evil Dutch growers who send those plants over here, and they have disease and they’re mislabeled. And there’s a whole scenario about that. Bare root hostas - dug up in the fall, cleaned and washed, brought to America by ship, offloaded and stored in coolers, then distributed by Dutch companies or growers to big box stores. “We think of plants from Holland being inexpensive, mass produced plants grown in the field.”*

*“I knew that wasn’t totally true because I’ve dealt with these people. I know what their problems are.”*

### Paul Vernooij

*“Years ago I decided to stop fighting them and join them, and I contacted a grower over there - Paul Vernooij. He grows ‘Orange Marmalade’ for me. The reason I went with him is because he insists on everything being as clean as he can make it. I’m big on that. He’s big on that.”*

Vernooij does things differently than most Dutch hosta growers and starts with tissue culture liners to make sure the plants are disease and nematode free.

There are millions and millions of hostas grown in the field in full sun in Holland, but the climate is cooler and often cloudy. Bob said that of the two

weeks they were on the trip that the first and last days were the only ones with sun. The rest of the time it was rainy or misty and cold and windy.

Vernooij asked him why the hostas were growing so slowly. Bob thought the lack of sunshine was the main reason. *“It’s a great climate for growing hostas, but actually they need more light. They don’t get enough.”* He plants ‘Orange Marmalade’ tissue culture liners directly in sandy soil (‘believe it or not’) near the North Sea in a trenching method that’s similar to what is used for tobacco and some vegetable crops in the United States.

Along with other crops like peonies, Vernooij grows only about 20 different hosta varieties, but in very large quantities. All of his hostas are shipped to a nursery in the U.S. that resells them to growers in addition to 2000 (of the 6000) Lowes stores on the east coast.

*“If you think about that – say you want to put 50 ‘Orange Marmalade’ in each one of those stores – if each Lowes got them that’d be 100,000. So when we talk about this kind of market, we’re talking about a huge market. So you need a lot of product. These are grown basically as a crop – you put them in the field, you grow them up, you harvest them. You take out what you need for the order and if you have extra plants those are put back in the field. They would like to turn this every year.”*

The fields were originally swampland and are 8 to 10 feet below sea level. They are lined by canals and water is pumped out of the reclaimed fields. Many spring flower bulbs are grown in the sandy soil along with hostas, peonies, and other perennials. Crops are rotated to help reduce any problems with disease or insects and fields are fumigated if needed. Since the fields are so close to the ocean fertilizers can contain no phosphates. A common fertilizer has a 12-0-42 formula. Water is pumped back from the canals to flood the fields when watering is necessary.

Hostas are grown for either one year or 18 months depending on the size of pot the plant will be sold in. Plants are harvested by potato diggers just as they are in large productions like Walters Gardens in the U.S. They are then power washed in large

machines similar to dishwashers. After drying they are put in plastic bags in bulb crates and placed in cold storage. Dutch hostas can only be shipped dormant to the U.S. Paul Vernooij ships nearly one million hostas every year. Labelling mix-ups usually occur with distributors – not growers.

Vernooij uses a somewhat different method in the cleaning process to attempt to have no disease in his plant stock. The common theory is that HVX is spread during the harvest because potato diggers are used to throw the plants to the top of the soil and can damage foliage and roots. Paul believed it was actually spread during the washing process because water comes into contact with any wound to the roots or foliage and is then recycled. He wanted to drill a separate well and use that water so that he wouldn't have to use recycled water, but he met with objections from both the government and bankers because his plan was not 'the way things are done'. After 18 months of dealing with the bureaucracy, he is now the only grower in Holland who doesn't recycle water.

Virus testing is done, but government regulations in Holland accept a 94% quality rate. Another grower boasted to Bob that they have a 97% quality rate. "I have a 100% rate. I'm sorry. Having been there, 100% is very, very hard and HVX isn't the scariest virus over there." Cucumber virus and tomato ringspot virus attack hostas as well and are much more prevalent in Holland. "The Dutch generally are very conscious of what they're doing and trying to do better all the time."

Paul Vernooij also grows plants in containers for garden centers and other nurseries. Dutch garden centers feature different plants each week.

*"So the plant has to be at its prime. If it's a flowering plant, the flowers have to be perfect and if it's a foliage plant, the prime time for the foliage. Hostas - they want them in bloom. You can't buy hostas all the time – just at certain times. Plants are scheduled to be sold for specific weeks. The trick for the growers is to have the plant at just the right stage of development for that week."*

## Jan van den Top

Jan van den Top was formerly in the construction business, but for many years has been involved with hostas. He's introduced a number of hostas – mostly sports. He grows everything in pots in greenhouses, and has no plants at all in the field.

*"He tries to create new plants in two ways. One – if he finds a plant with a little streak, he'll send it to the lab and the lab will send back a whole bunch of plants with streaks and he'll get one with an edge or a center and he'll send that back again. So it's an expensive proposition. He essentially gets a thousand plants out of tissue culture and out of that he gets one to put back into tissue culture. So it's a very expensive process."*

*"He does the same thing with tetraploid plants. He has them induced in the lab to change ploidy - double the chromosomes, and they send him back a whole big mess and he has to pick out the ones that are tetraploid. He invests a lot of money in those cultivars that you see."*

He patents his plants as a way to recoup the investment he has in each plant that is eventually marketed. Q & Z Nursery now handles many of his introductions in this country.

Bob estimates that Jan has a quarter of a million plants in several locations with six to eight greenhouses in each location. *"Really he is one person who is creating a lot of new things."*

Some of his new introductions include 'Bridal Falls' which is 'Niagara Falls' with a white edge. 'Tropical Dancer' is a sport of 'Spring Fling' with a wider, wavier white margin that van den Top thinks may be tetraploid. 'Dragon Warrior' is a white-margined 'Red Dragon'.

He also has mice. *"Once you get mice they just start reproducing like crazy. What you get back from the lab I call a 'mouse mess'."* Jan van den Top's named mice are the white-centered 'Desert Mouse' and the white-margined 'Lucky Mouse'.

Many sports have come from the 'Halcyon' and 'June' family. Jan van den Top has registered 'June Fever' – a sport of 'June' without the wax of its parent. From that he has developed and registered

several other sports. Bob commented, *"Some are good, some are named, some are junk."* 'Frosted June' and the tetraploid form 'Justine' have been released. Another sport has flecks in the center. Bob and Nancy's favorite is 'Orange Star' (available from Naylor Creek this year). It has the same coloring and changing color habit as 'Orange Marmalade' in the form of 'June'. *"So it was very nice I thought."*

*"He's also in love with 'Striptease' sports. I've seen more 'Striptease' sports than I ever wanted to see in my life. He's looking for something that he can name and patent in Europe and the U.S."*

*"He'll have a small plant that he likes – in theory the plant could be lost when it goes to the lab, but usually there are more similar types in the group of plants it was selected from. He does it pretty quick. He doesn't sit around and wait five years for this thing to make a clump – he gets a little plant and it's gone (back to the lab)."*

*"They take a group of plants like 'June' or 'Striptease' and they can pull an amazing amount of diversity out of them. We used to think there was one of a sport, but it's not the case. He also collects streaked anything."* Showing Jan's streaked form of 'Queen of the Seas' Bob commented that it would be sent to the lab to get a plant with a center or margin. *"It'll be a pretty plant."*

*"They try to improve plants by inducing tetraploidy."* Bob observed that a tetraploid sport of 'Alligator Shoes' with a wider, more attractive edge had lost the waviness of the parent. He questioned the desirability of a possible tetraploid form of 'Victory' saying that it would be smaller and less impressive. *"They're big on tetraploids – sports of tets – streaked tets."*

Showing 'Secret Treasure' - a sport of the Benedict/Solberg introduction 'One Man's Treasure', Bob said, *"This is the plant we fell in love with. We'll actually get some next year. We swapped plants. Right now they're in China – to Holland – to here. So there's no guarantee. I traded him some 'Curly Fries'. We just love that plant! He has a streaked form too – 'Exotic Treasure'. When Jim (Schwarz) names a streaked plant its 'Something Supreme' – over there it's 'Exotic'."*

## Marco Fransen

Marco Fransen lives in a very marshy area southwest of Amsterdam along a canal that is home to swans. *"The Dutch live very modestly generally - you don't see a lot of big houses."* The house is at canal level. U.S. regulations would require homes be built a certain level above that for flood prevention, but in Holland due to the high water table, a house has to be built on pilings set in the ground 30 meters – 100 feet. The below ground costs are as much as the house itself so the houses are very small. *"Building in Holland is extremely expensive."*

Marco's plants are the 'Paradise' series because he lives on Paradijsweg (Paradise Way). On Marco's road which is about 2 miles long, every house is a nursery so there are greenhouses everywhere. All glass with the 30 meter pilings so they're very expensive to build; some are very old and not in good repair. Canals are every 100 feet and all of the businesses are commercial nurseries. *"That's just the way they do things over there."*

Originally, Marco tried to have his hosta collection in ground, but it didn't work very well so his collection is displayed in pots. One advantage is that he is able to take them to the shows and plant fairs he sells at every year.

Marco's retail area is under shade cloth. Bob questioned its necessity since the sun rarely shines. Fransen Hostas always has 1001 different cultivars for sale – no more. 100 new hostas are added every year and 100 are discontinued. They're displayed in alphabetical order which makes them easier to find. Bob commented, *"If you start at 'A', by the time you get to 'G' or 'H' you're pretty bored so I don't think he sells as many of the higher letters."*

Marco has an estimated 450,000 hostas growing. He told Bob that was about 150,000 too many, but he finds it difficult to pass up a really good deal. *"That's why I don't want a big nursery. If you get 10% too many, that's an awfully big number."*

Many of the hostas Marco Fransen grows are for the wholesale side of the industry. *"He is the hub of hosta commerce in Europe. Everything goes*

*through Marco. Jan ships hostas to Marco. The guys in Belgium work through Marco. Marco works through Naylor Creek. Marco has the big website and does all the mail order to Russia and Sweden and Germany. But he also does a garden center kind of thing. He does a lot of plant fairs."*

## Dr. Ben Zonnenveld

Dr. Ben Zonnenveld is known in the United States for his testing of hosta ploidy. His office in Leiden is at the University of Leiden - the oldest university in Holland founded in 1575. The same building also houses the National Herbarium.

The machine Zonnenveld uses to test hosta ploidy is about 30 years old. He has used it for all of his research with hostas and other species. He most recently studied ploidy in tulips.

Dr. Zonnenveld was given a newer machine – only 20 years old – to use, but he's reluctant to use it for two reasons. It didn't come with an instruction manual, and he's afraid that data comparison may be more difficult with results from two different machines. He's happy to continue using the older machine.

When testing hosta ploidy, a hosta leaf is ground up and made into slurry with a buffer solution added. Since the pump no longer works, Dr. Zonnenveld then gravity feeds the slurry into the machine. The machine analyses the contents of the leaf and a graph showing the ploidy results then appears on the machine's monitor. These are the same graphs that have been used in the articles Dr. Zonnenveld has written for *The Hosta Journal*. After the ploidy readings are revealed, his next job is to explain them.

*"It's no hocus-pocus thing. There's no magic anywhere. It's not like he can fake it. Whatever it is - it is."*

*"I always thought of him as this lab guy based on the way he writes."* Bob said that writing styles can give a misleading idea of people and this was the case when he finally met Dr. Zonnenveld.

A highlight of the trip for Solberg was a visit to the National Herbarium where von Siebold's original

hosta specimens and many others are stored. A special key was needed to gain access to the special room with the specimens. *"We went in which was a great thrill for me being a botanist."*

Each preserved specimen in the National Herbarium's collection was selected as most representative of the plants growing in the area where it was collected and is a type of the plant. The white edge of 'Crispula' is still visible 150 to 200 years after its preservation. Another plant exhibited the branching scapes of *Hosta tibae*, but that was not the name given the plant when it was collected. Solberg pointed out the original tag of von Siebold and then the tags made by others including Highlander and Maekewa when they had made comments or corrections.

*"You see this path of all these great botanists who've gone before you on the sheet. It's really interesting to see that whole history."*

Changing the name or stating a name is correct would have been reasons to add a tag or note. Interestingly, with all of the corrections to hosta species made by W. George Schmid when he was working on his book, *The Genus Hosta*, his name does not appear on any of the tags. Bob pointed out that the tag entries were made by Schmid's research assistant.

Currently there is controversy of whether *Hosta sieboldiana* is a cultivar or a species. Bob looked at a type of *Hosta sieboldiana* in the collection, and noted that it has the typical *sieboldiana* leaf. *Hosta sieboldiana* may become part of a cultivar category or group or it may be included as part of the *Hosta montana* species.

*"So we looked at that and had a great time. I took a picture of EVERY one much to Nancy's and Ben's chagrin. 'Aren't you done yet?' I took two of von Siebold's." (Nancy: "It took hours.") "Only three and a half hours - 350 pictures."*

Ben Zonnenveld's small garden is 'chock full of plants'. Plants are everywhere – most are in pots with just a few in the ground.

*"He did have a few hosta seedlings that were interesting - to me."* Showing one with red on the

petioles and into the leaf Bob said, *"It's hard to tell in Holland because of the climate – bring that to America and how much red would be in it? He just sort of plays with hybridizing - he doesn't really do a lot."*

Showing photos of sanseverias and a tradescantia with two types of leaf variegation that alternates with every other leaf, Bob commented, *"He lives in this world with weird plant variegation. He's trying to figure out how it does it."*

Zonnenveld has plants growing vertically in addition to in the ground and in pots. *"He has plants everywhere, and he's run out of room so he's got them growing on top of his shed. You climb up a ladder and this is what you see up there."*

He also hybridizes succulents and tries to pass on the red edge of one to another with no red. *"We were more interested in the succulents."* (Nancy: "They were awesome!") As with Dr. Zonnenveld's other plants, succulents seedlings were everywhere – including on top of the greenhouse.

## Holland

*"We think of Holland as a field grown country, but in reality it's a country of greenhouses - glass greenhouses. Everywhere you go there are greenhouses. You cannot grow tomatoes (or peppers) outside in Holland. Too cold. Everything's grown in greenhouses. I was shocked that everywhere we went hostas are grown in pots and greenhouses."*

Holland has many canals with a main canal running from Amsterdam to Rotterdam. Certain areas have more canals than others and the pumps run 24 hours a day pumping water from the land into the canals and eventually to the sea. *"Holland is flat. The only time you go up is when you go over a canal."*

*"The neat thing about Holland we found is we learned Dutch – we could read, we couldn't speak it – in about a week. It's about half English. If you know some German and know some English, Dutch is easy."* Billboards, signage, and packaging all use both Dutch and English words.

Being from the south, Bob and Nancy are familiar with the hardiness of palm tree species and were able to tell when the zone in Holland changed from 7 to 8 because of the palm tree species available for sale in garden centers. The area the Solbergs visited was equal in latitude to the bottom of Hudson Bay in Canada, but due to the Gulf Stream it's Zone 7.

*"Although it doesn't warm up the North Sea - by the time it gets there the Caribbean heat is gone. That's why they can grow plants like crazy. It's not high light intensity - it's lower light; it's cooler - but it's that way year round."*

Bob also shared photos of the countryside in Holland: an old windmill that had been converted into a home by a Dutch celebrity; the large lake behind Marco Fransen's father's home is home to a wind surfing school; also near their home is the tallest cathedral in southern Holland.

Photos of the garden center the Solbergs found appealing showed its attractive, cross-merchandised displays and a small part of its vast amount of merchandise. Bob said it was like Home Depot 'without the lumber and toilets'. The dual language signage was well-illustrated there by a display of mum plants with the Dutch 'Chrysant' at the top and beneath it: 'Patio Mum'.

Nancy's great find was a pair of work boots made of a soft, pliable rubber. After returning home, she tried to buy more online, but the company doesn't ship to the U.S. "So we have to go back".

And Bob humorously shared his frustration with not being able to have a fountain drink with ice in England or Holland. Gas stations don't have fountain drinks. Although the garden center had a very nice restaurant with some food items sitting on ice, they wouldn't sell him any for his drink. The last day of the trip he finally found ice for his fountain drink at a McDonald's in Paris. 'That's what McDonald's is good for in Europe.' But they would only give him half a cup.