

Academy Garden Club Thymes

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMY GARDEN CLUB OF LENOX

August 2024

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Horticultural Column Boxwoods and Hostas

By Harriet Wetstone

Here we are in August, when the weather is forever muggy, and the wonderful color of spring and early summer blooming is mostly past. Not my favorite time in the garden. Come now, I say to myself, there is the wonderful echinacea, the hydrangea, the hardy hibiscus has fat blooms, there is still some of the bottle brush purple astilbe. But still, I am tired of weeding the gravel, tidying the daylily leaves, worrying over the nibbled-on hostas. When I feel like this, I rest my garden's eye by remembering the most enchanting garden view, at least for me, that I ever visited.



The Marqueyssac Gardens

The Marqueyssac Gardens are high up on a cliff in the Dordogne area of France. More than 150,000 boxwoods grow here, shaped, pruned and teased into fabulous shapes with a background of cypress trees and umbrella pines.

The stone roof buildings of the chateau, the views over the valley and the sinuous paths combine to create a glorious vista, one that fires the imagination. At once dynamic and full of movement but with a degree of formality and sharp styling skills. The boxwood shapes roll and merge, like an enormous and very tranquil flock of green sheep, spread out in beautiful, harmonious formations. I found the effect to be mesmerizing.



Hosta

Clearly topiary is out of reach of my garden. But groupings of green hostas, that I can do. I find hosta incredibly useful now in August when my garden has so few flowers for bouquets. Bouquets of hosta leaves are so easy to make and last so well in the vase! And there is such a variety of green and variegated green available!

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Hosta

Hosta. -the genus name is Hosta; also referred to as plantain lilies, or the Japanese 'giboshi.' Hosta is in the family Asparagaceae and is native to northeast Asia, i.e., China, Japan, Korea. They are herbaceous perennial plants with rhizomatic roots and are hugely variable in terms of size. They thrive not only in the garden, but they are also very useful container plants. They are long-lived, shade-tolerant, incredibly versatile, and surprisingly edible! They are grown as vegetables in some Asian cultures. Of course, that means that the deer and rabbits also eat them, although they may be toxic to dogs, cats and horses if eaten in large quantities.

But my love of hostas has not to do with nibbling, but with the wonderful variety of cultivars varying in size and texture and combinations of green. I am told that the nursery Shades of Green in Charlestown NY near Saratoga has wonderful displays of hostas and other shade loving perennials. The American Hosta Society is dedicated to encouraging events development of even more varieties.

While hostas are shade loving, they can do with some sun. The darker the green, the more a hosta wants shade, the lighter colored ones are more tolerant of some sun. The same goes for the placement of potted hostas. Potted hostas are easy to care for; they want a light potting soil and to be kept evenly moist. Hostas are disease resistant, but they are tasty to lots of different species, not just rabbits and deer. Happily, my garden is free of deer and rabbits (fingers and toes crossed) this time of year it's unusual that my beautiful hosta leaves have lots of little, tiny holes. One intriguing solution that I am about to try is a homemade pepper spray: cayenne or chili powder in soapy water! I will let you know if it works!

Thanks to: <https://bugwiz.com/get-rid-of-bugs-hostas/>; <https://worldofgardenplants.com/hosta-pests/>; <https://ownyardlife.com/68-types-of-hostas-hosta-varieties-with-pictures/> <https://americanhostasociety.org/about/about-ahs/>

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