



Volume 20, Issue 7

September, 2019



**President  
Diana Plahn**

### **A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT**

Hello Hosta Lovers:

I hope you've enjoyed your break from meetings, although we've had some really interesting weather.

Our next society event is our meeting on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 1:00 pm. Please remember that we had to change the original date on our calendar from a Wednesday back to a Sunday event because national speakers are not available midweek. So the meeting is on a SUNDAY, at 1:00 pm at

Creve Coeur Community Center. Please remember to read your newsletter to get the correct information for this month and future months.

The speaker is Bob Solberg, who is the owner of Green Hill Farm. So this is a meeting you'll want to come to. Bob has been growing hostas for over 35 years and has introduced about 100 hostas of his own. He will be bringing plants to sell at the meeting break and after his presentation. His presentation will be one of his many talks on Hostas.

Hope to see you there,

*Diana*

"Spring flowers are long since gone. Summer's bloom hangs limp on every terrace. The gardener's feet drag a bit on the dusty path and the hinge in his back is full of creaks."

- Louise Seymour Jones

## 2019 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**September 22**

**NOTE DATE CHANGE**

**Meeting with Speaker Bob Solberg**

**1:00 PM, Creve Coeur Government Center**

**October 20**

**NOTE DATE CHANGE**

**Meeting with Speaker Josh Spece**

**1:00 PM, Creve Coeur Government Center**

**November**

**Board Meeting**

**Time and location TBA**

**December**

**Holiday Party**

**Time and location TBA**

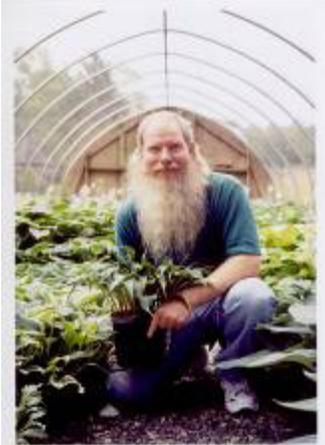


photo from [www.hostahosta.com](http://www.hostahosta.com)

**September 22, 1:00 PM**

Creve Coeur Government Center

### **Bob Solberg, "Hostas as Container Plants"**

Hosta hybridizing has been a passion of Bob's for almost 30 years. In 2008 he was awarded the Eunice Fisher Distinguished Hybridizer Merit Award by the American Hosta Society for his work with hostas. He has introduced about 100 hostas with more on the horizon. You've met Bob if any of the following hostas reside in your garden: 'Guacamole' (Hosta of the Year in 2002), 'Orange Marmalade', 'Curly Fries' (Hosta of the Year in 2016), One Man's Treasure', 'Sharp Dressed Man' (2019 Benedict Medal of Honor winner) or 'Frozen Margarita'. Just a few of his excellent plants.

Bob has been very active in the American Hosta Society, serving as the Editor of *The Hosta Journal*, the principle publication of the American Hosta Society and as Vice President of AHS. In 2003 he was the recipient of the Alex J. Summers Distinguished Merit Award for his service to AHS. Bob is also co-founder and currently the Executive Secretary of The American Hosta Growers Association, a professional trade organization for hosta nurseries. The members of the AHGA select the Hosta of the Year annually.

Bob is a nationally known lecturer on the subject of hostas and writer of many articles on hostas. He has edited the "Green Hill Gossip" since 1996 and the "Gossip Jr.", a twice yearly subscription newsletter since 2004. His talks are always entertaining, filled with information and liberally sprinkled with humor and common sense. Join your fellow hostaholics for what promises to be a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

For more information about Bob, his Green Hill Farm nursery, and his beloved hostas, access <https://www.hostahosta.com/>

## July - Member Auction

Weather-wise it was the best of years and the worst of years. The constant rains and cooler temperatures resulted in bigger than usual hostas. On the other hand, the rains turned beds into soft dirt or, where mulch was lacking, mud. Under these conditions, it is difficult to dig and divide plants. Our Society thanks all the members who were able to part with a bit of their favorite plants to make our auction a success.



Donated plants, hostas and a few companion plants, were arranged in alphabetical order. Bidders were encouraged to browse the offerings before the auction began. Pam Wolkowitz and David Birenbaum chat during the pre-sale time period. Pam's garden is well established, but there's always room for something new. As members saw at the June picnic, David's garden is up-and-coming with plenty of room for expansion. Melissa Byrd also checks out the display. Maybe next year we can schedule a Garden Walk at her St. Charles home.



Co-chairman Basil Honaker helped the auctioneer by holding up the plants that were being offered for sale and keeping track of who had bid what. Martha LaFata and Pam Wolkowitz looked up descriptions and average market-place prices for each specimen. After the plant was sold, Treasurer Melissa Byrd and Barb Moreland recorded the sale on index cards. At the end of the auction, they happily totaled each person's sales and accepted their money.



There was something for everyone. At left is 'Show Me', a rare almost white hosta discovered by one of our Society's founders Arlie Tempel. The picture at far right is of 'Atom Smasher'. This little jewel had several members bidding on it. Was that because of the quality of the hosta or its great name? The middle picture gives an idea of the range of plants available – from tall 'Earth Angel' on the left, large 'Guacamole' on the right and the smaller 'First Frost' and 'Green Mouse Ears' in the middle.



**Thanks** to Basil Honaker and Diana Plahn for organizing this event.

**Thanks** to every member who took the time to dig, divide and donate.

**Thanks** to everyone who came, bid often and enjoyed an afternoon of fun and camaraderie.

## Welcome New Members

**Julie and Brad Bloomquist of St. Louis, MO**

**Betsy Gatto of Lake St. Louis, MO**

**Cylde Johnson of Ladue, MO**

**Stephanie Rauch of Winfield, MO**

Several of our new members discovered us through our Facebook page. It is a great place to hear about our activities, ask questions about hostas or gardening in general and post your own comments and observations.

Join your fellow members at our September meeting and greet Bob Solberg, a nationally renowned hybridizer who is introducing exciting new cultivars.



## Did you see?

In the August issue of ***St. Louis Homes + Lifestyles*** is a large article featuring the beautiful Webster Groves garden of Martha LaFata. Over the years Martha has opened her piece of Eden to visits by our members as well as other local, regional and national gardening groups.

Like many of us, Martha's gardening journey began with the clearing of thickets of honeysuckle, overgrown shrubs and undesirable plants from the areas around her 100-year-old home. In the article, Martha states that the lot had been owned by a botanist so amongst the over-growth she found many nice old plants, bulbs and spring ephemerals. She discovered her ugly backyard euonymus-covered hillside had once been a terraced garden.

Determined to restore her garden, Martha joined our hosta society, where she met fellow gardeners who gladly shared their expertise and their plants. She took numerous horticultural classes at the Missouri Botanical Garden. It all paid off. That ugly hillside is now home to many large hostas, dwarf conifers, delicate lace-leaved Japanese maples and lots of peonies. The hillside is just a small part of her beautiful yard.

To read the entire article and see pictures, access ***stlouishomesmag.com*** and select the August issue.

## We're looking for a few good men and women

The terms for all of our officers will expire at the end of this year. President Diana Plahn appointed a nominating committee consisting of Dave Poos, Mike Schmitt and Phyllis Weidman to develop a slate of officers for the next two years. Positions open are: President, Vice-president, Treasurer and Secretary. The duties of each officer can be found on our web site [www.stlouishosta.org](http://www.stlouishosta.org) by clicking on the By-Laws tab.

If you are interested in becoming more involved with the operation of your society or desire more information, please email or call any of the committee members.

**Dave Poos** – [david.poos@att.net](mailto:david.poos@att.net) – 314-821-1622

**Mike Schmitt** – [mike636@aol.com](mailto:mike636@aol.com) – 636-272-5416

**Phyllis Weidman** – [pow1031@gmail.com](mailto:pow1031@gmail.com) – 314-965-7027

## They're coming from the North They're coming from the South What's a poor St. Louis gardener to do?



*Image by the Wisconsin  
Department of Natural Resources*

Having lots of earthworms in our compost piles and garden beds is a good thing. They devour all our kitchen scraps and decaying plant debris to make rich compost. Their tunnels help aerate and loosen our soil. They make great bait for erstwhile fishermen. What's the problem? The word on the street at the 2019 AHS Convention in Green Bay WI was there's a new worm in town that leaves parched earth in its path.

Meet the jumping worm (*Amyntas* spp.), also called crazy worms, Alabama jumpers and snake worms. Jumping worms look like other earthworms except they are larger, four to eight inches in length and the band

around their bodies, called a clitellum, is flat, light in color, smooth and completely encircles the worm. When disturbed they jump, thrash wildly and can even shed their tails in an effort to get away. Thus their common name.

These worms have voracious appetites. They lurk in leaves, mulch and the top layer of organic matter – eating, eating and eating, robbing the soil of all its nutrients. The worms' castings are grainy-looking, hard little pellets. After jumping worms arrive, soil doesn't hold together and instead looks more like coffee grounds. It no longer has the same moisture-retention qualities as before, so the water plants need passes through too quickly. The altered soil is also lacking in nutrients and can very easily erode.

Jumping worms are asexual, not needing a mate to reproduce. If you have one, you will soon have hundreds. They are relatively short-lived, 40 to 60 days, and cannot survive our winter temperatures. However they lay eggs in hard, dark cases called cocoons that resemble crumbs of soil that are extremely difficult to detect. These overwinter and hatch in the spring.

If you find one in your garden, one expert suggests securing it in a plastic zip bag and placing the bag in the sun for an hour or so. They will die quickly and you can then safely throw them away. Studies have shown that heat exposure above 104 degrees Fahrenheit kills the egg cases. Most commercial compost producers heat their products beyond that point, so these products should be safe to use.

This Asian invader has been widely reported in New York, New England, the South Atlantic states and now in Wisconsin, Northern Illinois and Chicago. They are working their way South. We must do our part. Don't buy jumping worms, crazy worms, snake worms or Alabama jumpers for bait. Check any soil, compost or potted plants purchased to be sure they are free of the worms. Wash garden tools with a 10-percent-bleach solution. Consider shaking off the dirt from all plants obtained from an affected area, washing the roots and then planting the bare roots in your own garden. It's just a matter of time before this plague reaches the St. Louis area.

## What could be worse than crazy worms jumping around our feet? Be prepared for this critter ambling toward St. Louis from the South!



photo courtesy of MO Department of Conservation

For years there have been rumors of this invader approaching our metropolitan area. We scoffed. We shrugged it off. We cried “our winters are too cold.” Guess what, the nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*) is here!

As reported in the *South County Times*, the Missouri Department of Conservation reports that this critter is here to stay and highway drivers and gardeners need to learn how to cope.

This odd-looking, nocturnal creature, about the size of an opossum, has plates of hardened skin covering most of its body, including head, legs and long tail. The nine-banded armadillo derives its name from the moveable “bands” in the animal’s midsection.

Armadillos have poor eyesight and hearing, relying on their noses and fine whiskers on their bellies to find their way toward food. They have strong snouts and claws to dig, seeking a tasty meal of grubs, larvae, insects, worms, and maybe a lizard or two. They don’t bite as their teeth are little round pegs used for grinding.

When startled, armadillos jump high in the air like the Asian carp do in our rivers. This is why so many end their lives as road-kill. Those armor plates are no protection against the chrome grill of a moving vehicle.

The armadillo usually digs a burrow about eight inches in diameter and up to 15 feet in length for shelter and raising young. A female gives birth to one litter each year consisting of four young, all of the same sex. The armadillo is the only mammal in Missouri that reproduces in this manner.

It’s a long way from Texas. Why are they here? Experts believe our milder winter temperatures have enticed them to move further north. They also have some unique skills that aided their long journey. Armadillos can float. They are able to inflate their intestines to help them float across rivers. They can also do the opposite – sink to the bottom of a streambed and walk across the bottom. They can hold their breath for up to six minutes.

What to do if one is uprooting your garden. Fences will help, but armadillos can climb over as well as burrow under. No repellent or fumigants are currently registered or known to be effective controls. Trapping is allowed, but what does one do with the critter. Please don’t release him in the park next to my backyard. Shooting is also allowed, but while effective, not an option that many urban gardeners would undertake. Don’t handle these animals without gloves, as they are known to carry diseases.

We have one hope. Armadillos do not tolerate freezing temperatures. To escape the cold, they burrow underground. However they are unable to hibernate or store fat deposits in their bodies. If the ground stays frozen for long periods of time, they will be unable to dig for food and will either freeze or starve to death.

Maybe we can get lucky and the armadillos will eat all the jumping worms and our winters will return to their former coolness and drive this new invader back south from which he came.

## St. Louis Hosta Society Officials

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**Karen Frey** – Hospitality

**Martha LaFata** – Vice-President  
314-961-7163  
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**Melissa Byrd** – Treasurer  
[mabyrd68@gmail.com](mailto:mabyrd68@gmail.com)

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**Joan Poos** – Newsletter Editor  
314-821-1622  
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## St. Louis Hosta Society Membership Information

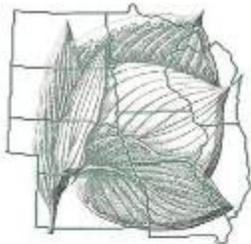
**Contact:** Melissa Byrd  
117 Gunston Hall Drive  
St. Charles, MO 63304  
[mabyrd68@gmail.com](mailto:mabyrd68@gmail.com)

**Dues:** \$7 per year, \$18 for three years  
Family or Individual

Meetings held at the **Creve Coeur Government Center, 300 N. New Ballas, 63141** (between Ladue Road and Olive), unless otherwise noted.

**Visit our Web site:** [www.stlouishosta.org](http://www.stlouishosta.org)

**Visit us on Facebook, St. Louis Hosta Society**



### Midwest Regional Hosta Society

The Midwest Regional Hosta Society represents Region 5 of the American Hosta Society that includes 9 states.

Membership in the society is \$20.00 for 2 years, which includes two issues per year of the newsletter.

Please mail a check made payable to **MRHS** to:

Barbara Schroeder,  
Treasurer  
1819 Coventry Dr.  
Champaign, IL 61822

along with Name, Address, phone, and email (Most correspondence is by email). For questions email [MRHS.Hosta@gmail.com](mailto:MRHS.Hosta@gmail.com).



### AMERICAN HOSTA SOCIETY

Members receive three issues per year of the Hosta Journal, which includes color photographs of hostas, reports on national conventions, scientific information concerning current research pertaining to hostas, and advertisements of interest to hosta families.

Membership checks should be made out to "AHS," and mailed to:

Sandie Markland, AHS Membership Secretary  
P O Box 7539  
Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948

Dues for one year are \$30 for an individual and \$34 for a family. For more information, visit the AHS website: <http://www.americanhostasociety.org/>