

Down the Garden Path



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THE GRAPE VINE

Hosta

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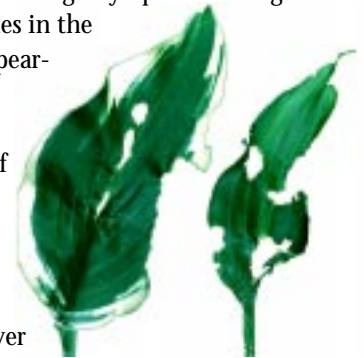
If you're looking for a plant that is winter hardy throughout the Midwest, excels under shady conditions, has fabulous foliage as well as attractive flowers, then Hosta is the plant for you. Also known as plantain lily, Hosta is available in a wide variety of foliage color and sizes. There are dwarfs that only reach a few inches tall and wide to giants reaching several feet in spread. Hosta foliage comes with blue leaves, green leaves, yellow or white variegation, leaves with waffle or pleated patterns, and some with all of the above! Some Hosta have white flowers, others are blue; some are even fragrant!

Most Hosta perform best in partial to full shade, but some have been able to survive full sun conditions if given plenty of moisture. The leaves will tend to burn or turn sickly yellow if given too much full sun.

While there is no need to divide Hosta on a regular basis, it is a great way to propagate and expand your planting. You can dig up older plants in spring or early fall and cut into sections with a sharp knife. Or simply cut and lift an offset of an older plant with a sharp spade, leaving the mother plant in place. Replant the divisions as soon as possible to prevent the roots from excessive drying.

One of the most common pests of hosta is the slug. Symptoms of slug damage appear as large, irregularly shaped holes in the leaves or the edges of leaves have a ragged appearance.

Slugs are soft-bodied, slimy creatures that feed on decaying organic matter and foliage of plants. Slugs require moisture to survive. Therefore, during the day they hide in damp places under debris or under thick ground cover and emerge at night to feed. Slugs leave a silver mucus trail behind them wherever they travel.



slug feeding injury

Control of slugs in the garden can be achieved by hand-collecting them at night when they are active. Minimizing their hiding places by keeping gardens weeded and surrounding grass cut short will also aid in their control. Some reports suggest that small pans, jar lids, or dishes at least 1/2 inch deep sunk into the ground at three to four foot intervals, and filled with beer may attract and drown slugs. Chemicals labeled as "Slug and Snail Bait" may also be used for control. Read and follow label directions before using any pesticide.



In most years, hosta is usually disease free. However, periodically, three disease problems - anthracnose, foliar nematodes and southern blight, might wreak havoc in hosta plantings.

Anthracnose, a foliar fungal disease appears as irregular brown spots during wet, humid, weather. The spots often lose their centers and leaves become tattered, similar to symptoms of slug feeding. To provide a less ideal condition for the anthracnose fungus, increase air circulation and improve drying of foliage by thinning crowded plantings. In addition, avoid overhead irrigation and water plants early in the day to help promote drying of foliage. Since the anthracnose fungus has the ability to overwinter on dead leaves, remove dead leaves from the garden in the fall to reduce the amount of inoculum for the following season. Some fungicides are available to manage anthracnose. Read the fungicide label carefully to be certain that hosta is listed as a host. Some fungicides are phytotoxic to certain plants and may burn foliage.



Foliar nematodes (*Aphelenchoides* spp.) can cause problems on hosta following cool, wet spring weather. As mentioned in a previous *Down the Garden Path* article (No. 121, October 8, 1997), foliar nematodes migrate from the soil surface up plant stems and onto leaf surfaces in a film of moisture provided by dew or rain. As the leaf surface dries, nematodes enter and feed on leaf cells, producing toxins that cause leaf tissue to turn yellow and die in between the veins. Dead interveinal areas are often rectangular in shape. Dead leaves which fall to the soil become a source of reinfestation. The best management practice is to collect the dead leaves during the growing season as well as after the first killing frost and dispose of them.

Southern blight is caused by the fungus *Sclerotium rolfsii*, which has a wide host range that includes hosta. Damage from this aggressive stem and crown rotter is favored by high temperatures and high humidity. *Sclerotium rolfsii* is a soil-borne pathogen that infects hosta petioles (leaf stalks) at the soil line. The fungus quickly girdles the petiole, causing a dark brown basal stem rot and an overall wilt from which the plant does not recover. Although other pathogens can cause a basal rot, *Sclerotium rolfsii* is easily recognized by the ropy or fan-shaped white mycelium and the tannish-brown mustard-seed-like "sclerotia" it produces on the surface of the rotted tissue or on surrounding soil. The sclerotia are resting structures of the fungus that allow it to overwinter. They germinate in summer, producing mycelial strands that grow on the surface of the hosta leaf stalks. The mycelia eventually penetrate the stalks and cause rot. Sclerotia can survive for several years in soil until a suitable host plant is present. There are no good chemical or cultural controls for this disease once it becomes established in your plantings. Exclusion from your premises is the best control.

It is important to look for the above mentioned signs and symptoms of these destructive diseases on any hosta transplants prior to bringing new plants into your home landscape. **Prevention is worth a pound of cure!**

Editor's note: Information regarding slugs was taken from Purdue Extension Publication E-45, *Slugs in Homes, Gardens, and Greenhouses*, available via the internet (<http://www.agcom.purdue.edu/AgCom/Pubs/>) or from your local county Cooperative Extension Service Office. ☺

OVER THE BACK FENCE

Q: I have seen a vine growing along old fences with bright orange flowers that are bell-shaped. I wanted to plant it in my yard, but someone told me it was a weed. What is this plant?

A: It sounds like you are describing Trumpetcreeper, *Campsis radicans*. Which is a woody perennial vine that grows on fence rows, buildings, and along the ground and has a showy funnel-shaped orange flower that appears from July through September. The leaves are alternate and are coarsely toothed. The woody vine climbs with the aid of aerial roots along its stems. When used as an ornamental, the trumpetcreeper may grow out of control.

Unwanted trumpetcreeper is difficult to control. Control is usually limited to herbicides. Repeated applications of Roundup may be used taking care not to harm any nearby plants. As with any pesticide, be sure to read and follow label directions before use. -- Nathan Saxe ☺



Trumpetcreeper

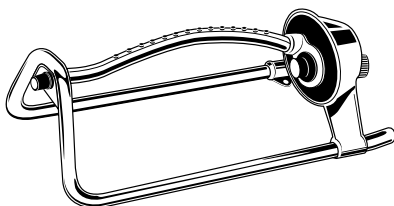
YARD

To Water or Not to Water?

Zac Reicher , Turfgrass Extension Specialist

Most of Indiana is suddenly very dry again, going without rain for three weeks or more. Dormancy is a natural occurrence allowing a grass plant to survive drought. However, September through November are prime growing months and the best time to perform many cultural practices on your lawn. Though little permanent damage will result from dormancy at this time of the year, consider irrigating now for a more attractive lawn next year because:

1. We are now entering the optimum part of the growing season for our cool season grass plants and the better the growing conditions (i.e. ample soil moisture), the quicker the grass will grow and spread.
2. September is the optimum time to fertilize your lawn but this fertilizer will lose much of its effectiveness if it is applied to a dormant lawn.
3. Early October is the best time to control broadleaf weeds, but herbicides will lose most of their effectiveness (and margin of turf safety) if applied to dormant weeds.
4. Dethatching and/or aerification should be done in September and neither of these practices should be done on a dormant lawn.
5. Well-watered lawns can withstand substantial grub feeding without showing damage and now is when white grubs may be actively feeding under turf. ☺



Lawn Improvement Through Fertilization and Weed Control

Zac Reicher , Turfgrass Extension Specialist

Most of us may be fairly happy with our lawns and may not be willing nor needing to reseed, but we can still dramatically improve our lawn with fertilizing and possibly some weed control.

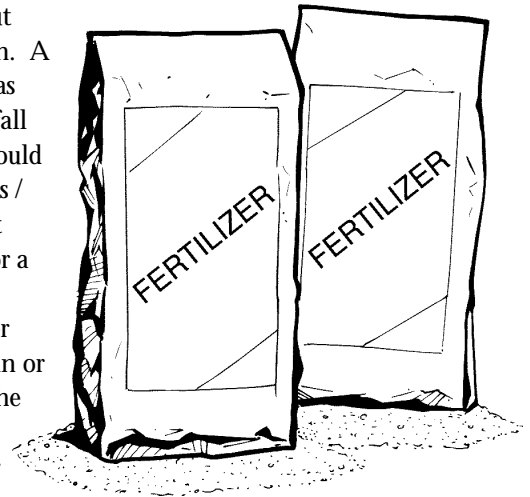
September is the most important time to fertilize a cool season turfgrass to encourage rooting and increased density. Fertilization should be done in mid-September with a product that has a nutrient ratio of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium of about 4-1-2. Examples of fertilizers with this ratio would be 24-6-12 or 20-5-10. Apply fertilizer at 1.0 lb N/1000 ft².

A second fertilizer application should be made after the last mowing of the year but while the turfgrass is still green. A soluble nitrogen source, such as urea, is very effective for late fall fertilization. The nitrogen should be applied at the rate of 1.5 lbs / 1000 ft². Nitrogen is the most important nutrient to apply for a late fall fertilization.

Two applications of fertilizer should be adequate to maintain or even improve most lawns in the fall. A third application in mid-October could boost your lawn even more if it was especially thin after summer. Apply 1.0 lb /1000 ft² in with a soluble nitrogen source like urea. Be sure to reduce the rate of application of the November application to 1.0 lb /1000 ft². The October application may encourage a winter disease called snow mold, so this application should be used only on very thin lawns where the increase in density is worth the risk of increased snow mold. For more information, refer to AY-22, *Fertilizing Established Lawns*.

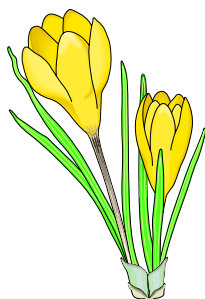
An application of a broadleaf herbicide containing 2,4-D, MCPP and dicamba in mid-October will control dandelions, plantain, wild violets, clover, and black medic among other weeds. Read and follow all directions on the herbicide label when using these products. Be careful when using these products because they may damage desired vegetation such as flowers, trees, shrubs, or vegetables. Apply this product on a sunny day when no rain is forecast and temperatures are above 50 degrees Fahrenheit. For more information, refer to AY-9, *Control of Broadleaf Weeds in Homelawns*.

More information and mentioned publications are available via the internet (www.agry.purdue.edu/agronomy/turf/turf.htm) or from your local county Cooperative Extension Service Office: ☺



UPCOMING EVENT

Indiana Beekeepers' Association, Inc. in conjunction with Purdue University Entomology will present a Beekeeping and Honeybee Pollination Conference at West Lafayette, Indiana October 16-17, 1998. For more information, please call 765-494-8761. ☺



Crocus

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GARDEN

Plant Spring Flowering Bulbs This Fall

B. Rosie Lerner, Extension Consumer Horticulture Specialist

Autumn is the time to plant crocus, daffodils, tulips and many other spring bloomers. Spring flowering bulbs are planted in fall to allow them to establish roots before top growth begins in spring. Planting too early may cause the bulbs to sprout this fall, only to be killed back by winter weather. Planting too late may not give the bulbs adequate time to root before winter. Bulbs should be planted in late September through mid October in central Indiana. Plant a couple of weeks earlier in northern Indiana and likewise, later in southern Indiana.

Start your bulb garden on the right path by planting only quality bulbs available from local garden centers or reputable mail order sources. It's best to shop early to ensure the best selection of variety and quality. Select large, firm bulbs and avoid those that are sprouting or molding.

While many bulbs can adapt to a wide range of soil types, none can tolerate poorly drained soil. Prepare the planting bed by adding organic matter such as peat moss, well-rotted manure, or compost. Adequate fertility can be achieved by adding a low analysis, balanced fertilizer such as 5-10-5 or 6-10-4 at the rate of 2 to 3 pounds per 100 square feet of bed. Mix all amendments thoroughly with the soil in the bed before you plant the bulbs.

The size of the bulb and the species will dictate the proper planting depth and spacing. The bulbs should come with planting instructions specific to that particular flower.

For more information on the many types of bulbs that can be grown in Indiana, contact your local county office of the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service and ask for a copy of *HO-86, Flowering Bulbs*. ☺

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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