

## VENTURE OUT

# 'Hosta' La Vista

*The ubiquitous Hosta beguiles with subtle displays of color throughout the Highlands/Cashiers landscape.*

It starts in February.

Your mailbox gets one. Then two, sometimes more. I'm talking about seed catalogs, gardening and plant magazines, and that's when the dreaming begins.

During some of the darkest days of winter, we're dreaming of the beautiful images in those 'wishbooks'. Why is it there's usually something on e.v.e.r.y. single page that catches your eye? So, you dog-ear this page, then another, and another until the choices seem impossible, and if you're like me, you hardly ever actually place an order.

There's one plant that is easily accessible without a catalog, and the best part is that there's virtually no maintenance with this 'wonder plant.'

I'm talking about the Hosta.

Although we're considered zone 6, we can grow many things slated for zones 5-7. Any of the Hosta family loves it here because of our temperatures and the amount of rain we get. I'm sure you've seen some of the huge Hosta plants that make you wonder if you're in 'the land that time forgot.' At the very least, lush specimens that remind us we live in a rain forest.

No doubt, if you have Hostas, you've already noticed the cylindrical green shoots bursting through the earth – mid-April throughout May seems to be the best time to witness the Hostas' miraculous rebirth after the cold hard winter. The beauty lasts for months, and sometimes after a good summer rain, you can almost see them stretch their leaves to welcome the sun.

There are up to 70 varieties of Hostas to choose from. Some people like



**Contributed by  
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to have all of one kind, while others prefer to mix it up showcasing the different colors, leaf size, and plant sizes. The colors range from a bluish tint to bright Kelly green to a lemony color, and there are variegated leaves as well. The center stalks bear flowers in pinks and whites, and are excellent in a vase mixed with other summer flowers.

Hostas need at least six weeks of cold weather (nightly temperatures below 40 degrees) in order to go into their necessary dormancy. While other zones can grow Hostas, the ginormous plants thrive in areas like ours.

Hostas are native to Northeast Asian countries, but can be seen all over the world. Leopold Trattinnick, an Austrian botanist named the plant in honor of another Austrian botanist – Nicholas Thomas Host. Thank goodness he was so generous and didn't name it after himself. Hostas is so much easier to say than would be Trattinnickas!

The best place to get any plant to grow well in your yard is to buy local. Remember, 'What grows in Highlands stays in Highlands.' The Mountain Garden Club Plant sale is always held on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend – it's a little early this year – Saturday, May 23.

The time is 9:00 A.M. to noon and you'll want to be there as soon as the gates open. One reason (obviously) is to get the best selection of all the plants offered, but another reason?

You get to stand there in the midst of one of the most beautiful Hosta displays around – and they all came from this area, "proven plants" ready to be adopted by you.