

## Hostas

Hostas are the staple of the shade garden. A wide variety of color combinations, centering on greens, blues, golds, and creams, provides nearly endless choices for your garden. Flowers appear in early to mid summer and range from white to lavender depending on variety.



Hostas are quite adaptable to most soil types, except for heavy clay. Most varieties of hosta require morning sun and afternoon shade to dappled shade in order to perform to their highest potential. Heights vary widely across the species, from dwarfs of around 6 inches to the giants topping out in the range of 3 feet - not including the flower scapes! The spread of a hosta as it matures is also widely varying. Some of the smaller varieties are actually well suited to container plantings. Other, more majestic varieties are excellent as mass plantings or eye-catching, stand-alone specimens.





Some hostas change colors dramatically within a single season as the leaves mature and the weather warms.



When hostas do reach a mature size, it is best to start dividing the clump and sharing the wealth! Hostas may be divided at any time in the growing season. A good division has at least three eyes - growing points where new shoots will sprout. For the first few years, while your hosta is young it's advisable to mulch around the base of the plant. Mulching increases the moisture around the roots, but also provides a lovely hiding place for the "evil nemesis" of any beloved hosta: *slugs*. Slugs love hostas too, and show their affection by eating holes in those gorgeous leaves. Lay traps or spread slug bait around the base of young plants in early spring as the new growth emerges to reduce the slug

population. In a few years, once the plant has become established, you should be able to remove the mulch completely and get rid of the slugs as well. Always clean up any dead foliage at the end of the growing season since plant-eaters (like slugs and insects) like to hide there over the winter months.

These photos appear courtesy of our perennial supplier, Walters Gardens, Inc.