

**H**ostas are one of the easiest and most reliable groups of hardy perennials to grow – a great plant for beginners with a shady garden. The genus *Hosta*, native to northeast Asia, consists of dozens of species and numerous cultivars. Long-lived, they grow in clumps and spread by underground rhizomes, or runners.



Hostas form low, lush clusters of bold, exotic leaves in a variety of sizes, shapes, and variegated patterns; they have varying tones of green and textured leaf surfaces. Stalks of white or pale lavender lily-like flowers held a foot or more above the foliage provide an added bonus. A few varieties even have fragrant flowers.

Popular Varieties Feature:

- Green lance- and oval-shaped leaves with white edges
- Green edged with white centers
- Leaves that are shades of blue, green, chartreuse and gold



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# Growing Hosta



## An easy and reliable perennial

### Designing with Hosta

Hostas are most often used as ground cover for shady gardens; however, they are also good for edging flowerbeds and borders, in rock gardens, as specimens and in containers too. Cut leaves and flowers are great for fresh cut flower arrangements.

Hostas come in numerous leaf shapes and sizes, with some more than 18 inches long while some dwarfs measure only a few inches high and wide. Some leaves have undulating edges while others exhibit a puckered or wrinkled texture. With well over 3000 registered and named varieties, there's one for almost every situation and location.

We typically carry dozens of different varieties of Hosta, blending the old "tried & true" with the endless supply of new and exciting varieties that emerge every year.

- Use Hostas primarily in shade or where there is minimal sun.
- White-leaved or variegated varieties tend to tolerate more sun, while blue and green tend to scorch in full sun during the summer.
- Variegated, blue and chartreuse-yellow colored leaves brighten dark shady locations, adding visual depth to flowerbeds.
- Plant in odd-numbered groups of 3, 5 or more, to create islands or waves of color.
- Hostas work well planted with ferns, lamium, pulmonaria and other shade loving perennials.
- Spring flowering bulbs like snowdrops, crocus, tulips, daffodils and anemones make good companion plants for Hostas, especially under deciduous trees. The emerging foliage of a Hosta eventually hides the fading bulb foliage in late spring.
- Don't forget that many annuals go well with Hostas, too. For constant color around Hostas, plant shade-tolerant begonias, impatiens and coleus for an attractive, colorful combination.

## Planting Hosta

Almost any time is a good time to plant Hostas although spring and fall planting is best.

1. Dig a hole as deep as the container and up to twice as wide as the container.
2. Remove the plant from its pot, loosen the roots a little and place it in the hole at the same level it grew in the container.
3. Backfill under and around your Hosta with loosened soil from the hole then gently press down to firm soil around roots.
4. Immediately water it in well and provide extra water for the first few weeks if rainfall is sparse.

## Caring for Hosta

Hostas require relatively little care compared to some perennial flowers and provide many years of reliable enjoyment.

1. Apply 2-3 inches of organic mulch around Hostas to prevent weeds and conserve soil moisture to minimize watering.
2. Fertilize with a complete fertilizer like Flower-tone or 5-10-5 beginning in spring when foliage first emerges. Repeat every 4-6 weeks until late July.
3. The best soil pH for Hosta is 6.5 to 7.5 (we can test your soil for free).
4. Deadhead flowers as they fade. Remove entire scape (stalk) to ground level when all flowers have finished at the end of summer.
5. Except during hot dry weather or droughts, natural rainfall is sufficient once hosta has established. Avoid excessive watering which will encourage slug and snail as well as leaf spot fungus diseases.
6. Occasionally dig up and divide your Hosta to maintain the size of the clump that you desire. Spring is the best time to divide them, with fall being second best; avoid summer or on a hot day. Water well for the first few weeks after dividing. Have extra Hosta plants after dividing? Give them away or trade with friends and neighbors!
7. The most common pest problem for Hostas is damage from slugs and snails. Use appropriate methods of control (we can advise you). There are now pet- and wildlife-safe slug and snail pellets available that contain iron phosphate. Limit watering to once or twice a week – only if needed. Deep, infrequent watering is better than brief, every-other-day watering, which encourages problems.



## You'll need these:

- Small shovel
- Compost or peat moss
- Flower-tone or 5-10-5 fertilizer
- Mulch
- Garden hose



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