
Russell's Hosta Helper

With their big bold foliage, Hostas are the most popular perennials for the shade garden. They are cold hardy and very easy to grow. With so many varieties available, gardeners have an amazing array of shapes, colors, textures and sizes to choose from.

Hosta foliage may be green, blue, white, gold or a combination of these. Blue hostas are actually green with a waxy coating. Colors may go through changes as the season progresses, with greens changing to yellow or yellow to creamy white. Leaf textures may be leathery or puckered. Edges might be ruffled. Shapes might be heart shaped, oval, cupped, long and narrow. The growth habit of a Hosta is usually a mounding clump. A few are vase shaped and some spread to form a groundcover. Flowers are either lavender or white. Depending on the variety, they can appear as early as June or as late as Oct. Some are fragrant.

Growth Rate: A hosta generally reaches full maturity in 4-8 years. The mature size depends on the variety that you choose. Miniature varieties, such as Hosta 'Pandora's Box' can be as small as just 4 inches high. Others, such as 'Sum and Substance' can grow 3 ft tall with a 5 ft spread.

Light: Hostas need some sun to develop good coloring and produce flowers. But they need protection from the strong afternoon sun which will scorch their leaf margins. For best results, plant hostas in a location where they receive morning sun. In general, blue leaved and white hostas require more shade. Yellow and light green hostas will tolerate more sun.

Soil: Hostas prefer moist, rich organic soil with good drainage. Once they are established, they can tolerate competition from tree roots. Although they can grow in wet conditions, hostas will not do well in areas that remain wet during the winter season.

Water: Hostas require a minimum of 1 inch of water per week—more if they are planted in sun. If you see leaf tips browning/burning or leaves drooping, this may be a sign that the plant is receiving inadequate moisture. Mulch will help retain moisture.

Fertilize: Use a balanced fertilizer in spring, a few weeks after the shoots emerge. Follow the instructions for rate and frequency of the fertilizer you use. Do not fertilize after Aug 1 and avoid getting fertilizer directly on the leaves.

Propagating: Hosta are rugged plants and can be divided almost any time. Spring or fall is best, to avoid stress. Lift the entire clump out of the ground and hose off the roots so you can see what you are cutting. Use a clean sharp knife to cut the clumps. Plant promptly and water in well.

Pests: Slugs and snails will often munch on hostas leaves at night, leaving them unsightly. Evidence of their activity are small round holes in the leaves and silvery slime trails. Solutions: Slug bait, beer traps, plant thick leaved varieties of hosta, diatomaceous earth and copper barriers. Deer can eat all of your hosta overnight! Solutions: Deer fencing, deer repellent (change brands often and reapply after rain. Repellents change the color of blue hosta.), motion detector sprinklers. Voles will eat the roots of plants and hosta are a favorite. Solutions: Wire cages around roots, repellents, mousetraps baited with peanutbutter placed under clay pots.

Selecting The Right Hosta

Fast Growing	Size	Description	Sun Tolerant	Size	Description
Abiqua Moonbeam	M-L	Blue-green w yellow edge	Albomarginata	M	Green w white edge
Allan P McConnell	SM	Green w white edge	Allan P. McConnell	SM	Green w white edge
Aureo-marginata	M	Green w yellow wdge	Aphrodite	L	Light green
Blue Umbrellas	L	Blue green	August Moon	M	Gold
Fire Island	SM	Yellow w red petioles	Brother Stefan	L	Blue green w gold ctr
Fragrant Bouquet	M	Lt green w yellow edge	Captain Kirk	M	Gold w green edge
Fried Green Tomatoes	M	Frosty green	First Frost	SM	Blue green w gold margin
Gold Standard	M	Gold w dark grn edge	Fragrant Bouquet	M	Lt green w cream edge
Guacamole	L	Gold w green edge	Francee	M	Dk green w white edge
Honeybells	L	Green	Fried Bananas	L	Gold
Komodo Dragon	XL	Grey green	Gold Standard	M	Gold w dk green edge
Minuteman	M	Dk green w white edge	Golden Tiara	SM	Green w yellow edge
Patriot	M	Dk green w white edge	Great Expectations	VL	Cream w blue-grn edge
Royal Standard	L	Dk green	Guacamole	L	Gold w green edge
So Sweet	M	Green w yellow edge	Honeybells	L	Green
Stained Glass	M	Gold w green edge	June	SM	Cream w blue edge
Strip Tease	M	Dark green, white streaks	June Fever	M	Yellow w blue-grn edge
Sum and Substance	VL	Apple green	Liberty	L	Blue-grn, cream edge, vase
Sun Power	L	Gold	Paradigm	M	Gold, bl-grn edge, streaks
Wide Brim	M	Green w white edge	Paul's Glory	L	Gold w blue edge
Wolverine	M	Blue green	Regal Splendor	VL	Ltblue w wht edge, vase
			Royal Standard	L	Dk green
			Sagae	VL	Blue-grn w gold edge, vase
			So Sweet	M	Green w yellow edge
			Sum and Substance	VL	Apple green
			Sun Power	L	Gold
			Venus	L	Green
Very Small	hwx	Description	Fragrant Flowers	Size	Description
Cameo	5"x14"	Blue w white edge	Aphrodite	L	Apple green
Cat's Eye	3"x 8"	Cream w dk green edge	Cathedral Windows	M	Gold w green edge
Chartreuse Wiggles	5"x15"	Gold	Fragrant Blue	M	Frosty blue
Cherish	4"x10"	Gold, green edge	Fragrant Bouquet	M	Lt green w cream edge
Gold Drop	6"x12"	Gold	Fried Bananas	L	Gold
Hush Puppies	5"x16"	Grey-green w white edge	Fried Green Tomatoes	M	Frosty green
Lakeside Cupcake	5"x16"	White w green edge	Guacamole	L	Gold w green edge
Lakeside Elfin Fire	5"x12"	White w grn specks & edge	Honeybells	L	Green
Mighty Mouse	6"x12"	Blue-green w cream edge	Plataginea	M	Green
Pandors's Box	4"x10"	White, blue edge & streaks	Royal Standard	L	Dk green
Trifecta	6"x10"	Wht, grn edge LtGrn streak	So Sweet	M	Green w yellow edge
			Stained Glass	M	Gold w green edge
			Venus	L	Green
Very Large	hwx	Description			
Blue Angel	36"x85"	Blue, thick leaves			
Blue Mammoth	30"x70"	Blue, corrugated			
Earth Angel	30"x80"	Blue-green w cream edge			
Elegans	36"x48"	Blue, thick, slow			
Empress Wu	54"x54"	Dk green, heavy veining			
Frances Williams	36"x48"	Blue-green w yellow edge			
Great Expectations	29"x48"	Cream w blue-grn edge			
Komodo Dragon	36"x70"	Grey green			
Krossa Regal	36"x70"	Blue-grn, vase shape			
Regal Splendor	36"x40"	LtBlue w white edge, vase			
Sagae	36"x72"	Blue-grn w gold edge, vase			
Sum and Substance	33"x80"	Apple green			