

Hosta Information

Let's start with a recipe for a good garden loam.

Material	Amount
Sphagnum Peat Moss	3 Parts
Topsoil	1 Part
Coarse Sand	1 Part
Mushroom Compost	1 Part
Manure Compost (Aged)	1 Part

Shade Loving vs Shade Tolerant

- Hostas are shade tolerant and not shade loving as many of us had thought. The irony about Hostas is that they actually grow and bloom more vigorously in full sun. However, the leaves also become scorched and unattractive. While some varieties are said to be more sun tolerant, I do not recommend their use in full sun due to our Midwest summer sun intensity, hot temperatures and drying winds. Nonetheless most Hostas will benefit from a couple hours of morning sun. Provided they are on a good watering program.
- Blue Hostas do well in all shade because their blue coloring comes from a waxy coating on their leaves. Too much sun will melt their wax. For the most part thicker hostas are more sun tolerant.
- Hostas from the 'Plantaginea' family are more sun tolerant *provided* they're kept on a good watering program. Visit www.hostalibrary.org and view all the varieties from this species.

Hosta Pests

- Slugs can be a problem in the shade garden. Here are some organic and inorganic ways to control slugs. Encourage reptiles to take up residence in your garden. Toads, turtles and snakes all prey on slugs. If you see evidence of these pests, avoid dense groundcovers and mulches that provide a hiding place. Leaf mulch will deter slugs as will long pine needles. Broken eggshells and coarse sand are physically difficult for slugs to get across either through being scratchy and sharp or by drying up the mucous glands that are necessary for their movement. Heavier soils support higher slug populations. Looser soils are harder for them to move through and more frequently cultivated soils expose their eggs to predators and environmental damage. Handpick slugs and snails at night, use a flashlight, and drop them into a bucket of soapy water. Lay boards in the garden or a scooped out grapefruit half to trap slugs and snails. Check your trap early in the morning and remove the slugs as they collect. Drench the soil around the plant with cold coffee, or coffee grounds. Line the garden with copper strips. Slugs receive a shock when they touch copper, and they will not cross the barrier. When using this method, make sure you trap the slugs OUT and not IN. Slugs love beer. Bury a shallow container of beer in the garden, with just the lip above the ground. When they go in for a drink, they will drown. Some commercial products that really work without harming the environment Sluggo is one, It contains iron phosphate which is good for the soil as it breaks down. Diatomaceous earth is all natural. Fall is a particularly important time of the year to control slugs because it is one of their major egg laying times. Several manufacturers have toxic slug baits, when using chemicals, read the label carefully. They may be harmful to four legged pets and fish and cannot be used around standing water.
- Deer can eat all your Hosta plants in one evening, leaving just the stalks standing. Ten foot tall fencing and trained guard dogs are the only reliable method to keep them out of the garden. Gardeners also use deer repellent, a bitter-tasting chemical that is sprayed on the leaves. These products need to be reapplied after several rainfalls. Motion detector garden sprinkles have also been used with some success.

Fertilizing

- A balanced granular fertilizer such as 10-10-10 can be applied in early spring, then again every 6 weeks. A liquid fertilizer can be applied every 7 to 10 days. Remember to stop feeding around the first of August, to harden them off before cold weather sets in. Many gardeners do not need additional fertilizer if a soil test shows the soil

has sufficient amounts of the necessary nutrients. In this case, an addition of compost over the bed once a year, applied in the fall, is usually sufficient.

- Hosta prefer soil with a pH in the range of 6.5 to 7.5.

Health Issues

- Diseases and viruses are of concern and are an emerging and important issue in growing Hostas. Symptoms include and irregular mottling of the foliage, yellow ringspots, or small yellow dots or flecks on the leaves. If a virus is present, the plant(s) should be discarded and tools used in the Hosta planting or digging, should be disinfected. If there is a specific need for diagnosing viruses in a Hosta plant or planting, contact your state university's plant and /or pest diagnostic lab to discuss the testing procedures and fees that are involved. **Hostalibrary.org** has a section dedicated to diseases.
- Other problems may show up as chemical damage, cold or frost damage, sunburn, and "melting out" of the leaf. These problems are not infectious.