

HOSTAS IN CONTAINERS

by: SWMOgardens.com

Hostas are so versatile. A drift of So Sweet makes an excellent ground cover. A single Great Expectation will grab the eye from 20 feet away. I've also discovered, hostas can be absolutely lovely in the right container. Here are some ideas to try this year.

First the basics: A large container will require less watering. I would recommend a minimum 12 inch wide (or 3 gallon) container. The right potting soil is important, too. A 50/50 mix of Miracle Gro Potting Mix and shredded pine bark mulch (with the big chunks removed) works great for holding in moisture and feeding the plants. Soak the mix really well before putting in the hosta.

Second, choose the right container: If you use ceramic or terra cotta pots, leave the hosta in its plastic pot inside the bigger container. This will make it easier to remove the hosta from the container to plant it in the garden before winter. Hostas can stay in wood, metal, plastic, or concrete containers year round. In December, when the soil is frozen, lay them on their side on the north side of your house until April 1st. There is no need for watering; they will be fine.

Now the fun part:

- Match the color of the container to a color in the hosta. June looks superb in a blue ceramic container.
- Put a giant Sum and Substance or Blue Angel in a ½ barrel with variegated liriope around the edge.
- Regal Splendor is very regal in a tall, vase-shaped, antique container.
- Unusual hostas like Praying Hands, Fire Island, or cute little Blue Mouse Ears, make excellent centerpieces on a table.
- Try grouping three of the same hosta around a small fountain.
- Plant a collection of mini hosta in a large container with a dwarf Japanese maple.
- Add companion plants. Impatiens or vinca major around a blue Halcyon look beautiful. Japanese painted fern and Krossa Regal go great together. The right coleus or heuchera compliment a chartreuse hosta wonderfully.

If you keep your containers of hostas together, instead of spread all over the garden, it will make watering a lot easier. Place a bunch of hostas on your deck so you can see them from inside, or be surrounded by them while sitting outside.

Experiment with hostas in containers this year. You're sure to love the results.