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How Hornbaker Gardens Became Famous For Hostas

By: Katie Smith

Tucked away on a country road in southern Bureau County, Hornbaker Gardens has become a destination for gardening enthusiasts from across the state, and even across the country. This is in part due to the large following their hostas have attracted. Many of you have been loyal customers for years and may already know the story of how the Hornbakers got started. However, there are new customers, and even new employees (myself included), that may be curious as to “why hostas.”

According to the “Our Story” tab on hornbakergardens.com (and you can read more there too!), Rich Hornbaker and his late wife Kathy both loved to garden. When they bought the land that Hornbaker Gardens sits on today, Rich got the idea of growing a business along with growing their family there. What started as a pick-your-own fruit farm became a perennial business a few years later after success growing mums and a trip to the Perennial Plant Association conference in 1986. Over the years, the Hornbaker family has put a lot of pride and effort in expanding the selection of hosta varieties they have to offer. They grow hundreds of varieties in

propagation beds and ship hostas across the country from mid-April through early October.

When I asked Rich what attracted him to hostas at that convention, he said he was amazed by this gorgeous plant that grew in the shade. After seeing them, he thought that everyone would want hostas due to how easy they were to grow and the tropical effect they provide with different color and leaf shape combinations.

Rich says he believes Hornbaker Gardens has become such a destination not only because of the selection and popularity of hostas, but also with the development of the botanical gardens and arboretum.

While people come from all around to buy what has become known as “Hornbaker Hostas,” Hornbaker Gardens is more than just a retail garden center. By planting many of the plants sold in the retail center in landscaped beds across the property, two things have been achieved. Hornbaker Gardens has become known as a botanical garden, and customers can see varying maturity stages of perennials that have been “tested hardy at Hornbaker Gardens.” Come by and see for yourself how Hornbaker Gardens is more than just hostas and why the Hornbakers are passionate about all of their plants.



What Hornbaker Employees Like About Hostas

Dave: "You can't kill them if you tried. And if they look ratty, just cut them off at the base and they will flourish when they re-grow."

Molly: "I'm amazed by the variety of sizes and foliage color. There's one to fit any sized space in your shade garden."

Emily: "There's many things, but the first thing that comes to mind is all of the variations in size, shape, color, and leaf shape. You can have a lot of them in one spot, but there will still be interest because of the different kinds."

Angie: "You can plant them, water for a couple weeks, and pretty soon they will become self-sufficient. In a couple of years you can divide them and get twice as many as you started with."

Carol: I think it's really cool that gray tree frogs will hide in them. It's also super interesting that some of them have blue leaves. You don't see many plants like that.



Daylily Season

If you've visited the garden center this year, you may have noticed we've made some changes to the field of daylilies growing on the west side of our property. Last year we had a clump sale to eliminate varieties that weren't as popular. The field is smaller now, but we are still growing around 140 varieties of daylilies. The daylilies in the field need some time to size up so we won't be digging from the field this year. We do have over 70 varieties that are available in pots for you to take home when you visit. The early varieties start blooming in late June, the peak of the bloom season is usually the two weeks after July 4, and there are still late-blooming varieties performing in late July and early August. Daylilies are low maintenance and will provide that perfect pop of color in your sunny gardens.

HOURS:

We are closed on Sunday, July 4th. Through October 10th, we will be open Monday through Saturday, 8 am to 5 pm, and closed on Sundays. One exception will be Sunday, July 18th, for the Bob Solberg hosta event, when we will be open 9 am to 5 pm.

Meet hosta expert Bob Solberg Sunday, July 18th

Open 9 am to 5 pm
11 am or 1 pm presentation

Door Prizes 🍃 Photo Contest

Free event!

**\$2 OFF
ALL HOSTAS**

*Join in the fun and bring
a floral arrangement that includes
at least one hosta leaf.*

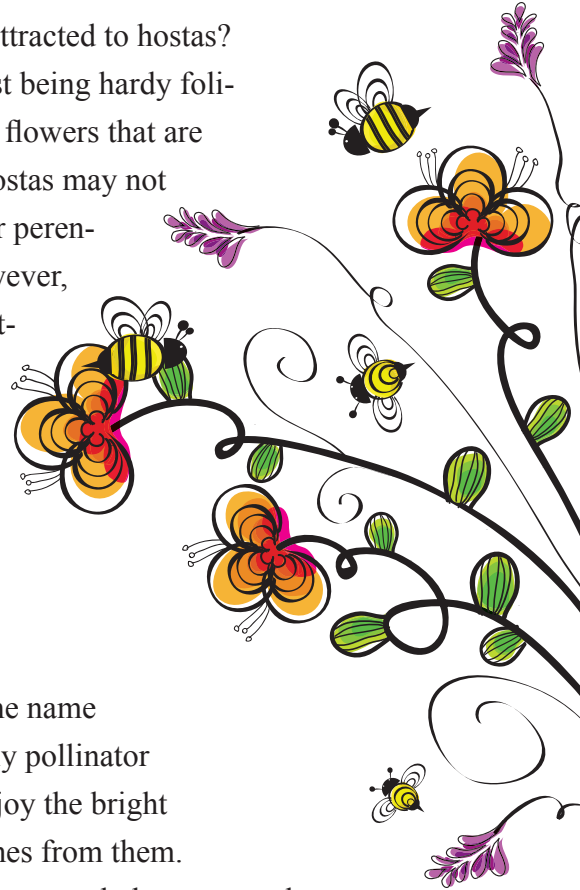




Pollinator Friendly Perennials

By: Katie Smith

Did you know that hummingbirds are attracted to hostas? While they are commonly thought of as just being hardy foliage plants, hostas also have tubular shaped flowers that are filled with nectar. It should be noted that hostas may not attract hummingbirds as well as some other perennials, particularly red colored flowers. However, with our expansive selection of hosta varieties and the upcoming presentation from hosta expert Bob Solberg, we wanted to let you know of another thing that makes hostas a great addition to any landscape. Some other perennials that attract pollinators are listed below:



Hosta 'Amazone'

Buddleia (Butterfly Bush) – despite the name “Butterfly Bush,” butterflies are not the only pollinator these plants attract. Hummingbirds also enjoy the bright spikes of flowers and sweet nectar that comes from them. While many varieties can become fairly large, we do have a couple of dwarf kinds that will fit well in almost any sunny garden space.

Echinacea (Coneflower) – we have an entire bench dedicated to many different varieties and colors of this classic flower. They come in varying heights, some of which get up to three feet tall. Echinacea will attract butterflies and bees all season long with their bright colors and sweet pollen.



Coneflowers



Heuchera 'Timeless Treasure'

Heuchera (Coral Bells) – if you are looking for a shade plant that will attract pollinators, but is not a hosta, heuchera is a good option. We still have many shades of this leafy plant available and its small sprigs of petals will attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

Leucanthemum (Shasta Daisy) – on our retail benches you will find both short and tall varieties with varying shades of white flowers. Butterflies especially will enjoy the bright yellow pollen in the center of these flowers.



Leucanthemum 'Becky'

Salvia (Meadow Sage) – early in the day, we always find lots of bees zipping about the Salvia plants on our retail benches. Hummingbirds and butterflies also love Salvia's clumps of tubular flowers that are present from early summer until the fall.

At the time of publishing, the above listed perennials were well stocked and blooming. However, if you cannot find what you are looking for, stop by the checkout area to get a more extensive list of perennials that pollinators will love.



Salvia 'Bumbleblue'