

The Bigger, the Better: How to Grow Humongous Hostas

1. Select the best location

Hostas grow best in a site that offers morning sun and afternoon shade. They also do well in bright, indirect sunlight, and in locations with high, overhead dappled shade. When choosing a site to grow giant hostas, be sure to think into the future about how big they will really get.

2. Prepare the planting site well

This may involve some grunt work, but it's well worth it. As they say, "No pain, no gain". Preparing the soil well is a task which will reward you in the end. About 8" of rich, humusy topsoil is adequate, but 12" or more is best.

3. Plant on a raised mound

Plant on an 8" raised mound, with smaller companion plants in the foreground. Remember that when making a new bed, some settling will occur, so an 8" mound may very well end up being only 4-6" high.

4. Select a cultivar that gets **BIG**

Let's face it: small and medium hostas have their place in the garden, but they will never get BIG. It's in the genes. Simply put, to have BIG hostas, you must select cultivars which can eventually get BIG. Go to www.hostalists.org and click on "Very Large Hostas" for a list.

5. Allow enough space

Giant hostas can reach 8 ft. or more in diameter. Give them plenty of room! Fill the area in between with small plants, which are easier to move than the large ones if they become crowded for space.

6. Provide adequate light

Hostas are shade tolerant, NOT shade loving. Most varieties do best when grown in a good amount of sunlight. Filtered sunlight and high overhead shade are best.

7. Prevent root competition

Tree roots are fierce competitors for water and nutrients. A dry, shady area with low nutrient content and compacted soil is great for a moss garden, but hostas will need to fight hard to survive.

8. Mulch and fertilize

The benefits of mulch should not be under-estimated. Mulch holds moisture, blocks weeds, reduces erosion, enriches the soil, and makes the garden attractive.

The application of a balanced fertilizer will give them a boost in the spring. But ideally, a soil test should be performed first to see what nutrients need to be added.

9. Water, water, water

Hostas are thirsty, especially on hot, windy days and during extended dry spells. You cannot over-water a hosta!

10. Safeguard against pests and diseases

Be on the lookout for any pests and diseases which may disfigure and weaken your great looking plants...the ones you've worked so hard to grow and enjoy.

- Deer and rabbits
- Voles
- Slugs, Crown Rot (Southern Blight), Virus HVX

11. Protect against late spring freeze

Hard frosts and freezes in late spring can cause irreparable damage to the crown, resulting in stunting and fairy ring. This can set a large hosta back several years and some may never recover.

12. Don't transplant or divide

Hostas do NOT need to be divided! They do best when left undisturbed for years. They can survive and thrive indefinitely without transplanting or dividing.

13. It takes time

Be patient. Slow-growing and giant varieties take 5 - 7 years or longer to reach maturity. This is an investment with a long-term payoff.

Follow these 13 tips and you'll be well on your way to growing some absolutely HUMONGOUS HOSTAS!

Don Rawson
(616) 805-6519
donrawson1@gmail.com