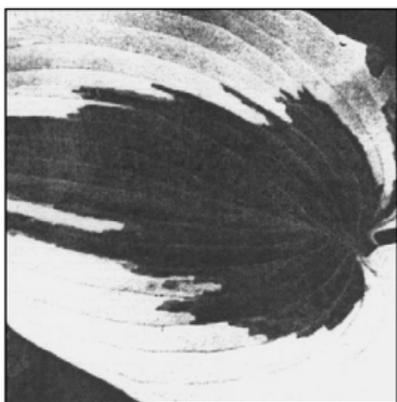


# PLANT CORNER

Welcome to another year of the Plant Corner, a series of profiles of STAR PERFORMERS among perennial garden plants from the folks at Chaska Farm & Garden.



## 'Blue Ivory' Hosta

If I was to use one word to explain the continued popularity of hostas it would be "investment". Unlike all annuals, which live only one season and many perennials (which are supposed to last), hostas really do last. They also increase and can be moved around about as easily as an ottoman or sidetable. It is easy to justify an expense when the commodity is so durable.

Sure, hostas are easy to grow, adaptable and are beautiful in a blinding array of sizes, colors and looks. But to have your cake and eat it too: priceless!

'Blue Ivory' is a sport or deviant form of the old favorite 'Halcyon', a medium sized hosta with sturdy, powdery-blue leaves. There have been many such sports and breedlings from 'Halcyon', so this is a proven point of departure. What sets 'Blue Ivory' apart is its very broad, cream-changing-to-white leaf margin, leaving only a small blue center. Usually the reverse is true, the margin being the smaller. Otherwise the plant itself grows to about 18" tall and produces lavender flowers above the leaves in mid-summer. Blue hostas often are fine to live in fuller sun, but the blue cast to the leaves wears off in brighter light. The plant doesn't suffer but you might. Likewise, white margins can burn in the hot sun especially in early spring. You can just move the plant of course.

Aesthetically, so much white leaf color would take tender treatment in a landscape. It's a very formal look, as opposed to natural, and perhaps would look best in a neat tended setting. I would contrast 'Blue Ivory' with solid leaf colors, maybe a yellow-leaved hosta, or a fine-textured (small-leaved) plant.

So many other hostas, so little space! 'Ivory Coast' and 'Liberty' are other wide-margined hostas, but much larger. We also are getting a number of new varieties with red stems, and the red is starting to show up even onto the leaves. Try 'Miss Ruby', 'Miss Susie' or 'Cherry Tart'. You might like the pie-crust edge on the big blue variety 'Queen of the Seas', I did. For big bright-canary colored and ripple-edged leaves try 'Dancing Queen'. And I don't even have the right words for the quilted look of 'Stitch in Time'. Hostas: we're still standing through the faint!

— Tom

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