

**Here They are to Save the Day**  
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**For Week of February 8, 2010**

Growing perennials can be very rewarding and easy to grow. Over the years I have enjoyed adding perennials, dividing existing ones, and moving things around a bit. In addition to growing perennials, well placed annuals among perennials will help to ensure color all season long. The most versatile perennial is the Hosta; well, that is my opinion anyway.

There are literally thousands of Hostas to choose from. Some newer varieties of Hosta include 'Pineapple Punch', 'Tropical Storm', and 'Mighty Mouse'. 'Pineapple Punch' has rippled variegated leaves that are long and narrow. They emerge dark green and have a light green margin that turns a gold color. The margins turn a creamy white later in the season. This variety grows to a height of fifteen inches with a twenty-eight inch spread. 'Tropical Storm' is a smaller Hosta growing to a height of eight to ten inches and a spread of sixteen inches. It has heart-shaped leaves that are green with wide yellow gold margins. Due to the puckered leaves this Hosta is less attractive to slugs than others. 'Mighty Mouse' is a small but mighty Hosta with blue-green leaves and creamy yellow margins. Turning a grey-green color with creamy white margins by summer this Hosta grows to a height of eight inches and a spread of twelve inches.

Other Hostas come in hues of green, blue, yellow, and white leaves which can be puckered or smooth, large or small and even tiny as some grow only an inch tall. You can literally use only Hostas and achieve a very nicely landscaped area. However, I prefer to use some other perennials in my beds to give a nice all around look.

Mix in some Japanese Painted Ferns or shade loving ground covers to accent the Hostas. If you have some areas of partial sun you could even try one or both of the new Daylilies, 'August Frost', a full flowered form with near-white to pale yellow blooms or 'Elegant Explosion', a reblooming Daylily with an explosion of orange-gold flowers in midsummer and then again later in the season.

If you have more sunny areas than shady ones consider trying the new Monarda 'Purple Rooster'. This Monarda has true royal purple flowers and clean foliage. Try sedum 'T Rex' for sunny dry locations. 'T Rex' is an upright sedum with sharply serrated edges and greenish clusters of buds covering the entire clump, opening to light rose pink flowers similar to 'Autumn Joy'. 'Hot Papaya' Echinacea is another good selection for that hot sunny area. Blooming from mid to late summer with fragrant orange pom-pom flowers and a papaya orange halo center this plant grows to three feet tall so it would be a nice background plant in any garden.

When looking for some new ideas for perennial plantings this spring keep your eyes open for these and other new perennials and listen closely for you might just hear Mighty Mouse singing "here I come to save the day".

For additional information on new varieties or other horticultural topics feel free to call me at 605-394-2188 or email to [ricky.abrahamson@sdstae.edu](mailto:ricky.abrahamson@sdstae.edu). The Pennington County Extension website has lots of information available 24/7 at [www.co.pennington.sd.us/extension/extsvc.html](http://www.co.pennington.sd.us/extension/extsvc.html).