

Hosta Virus X

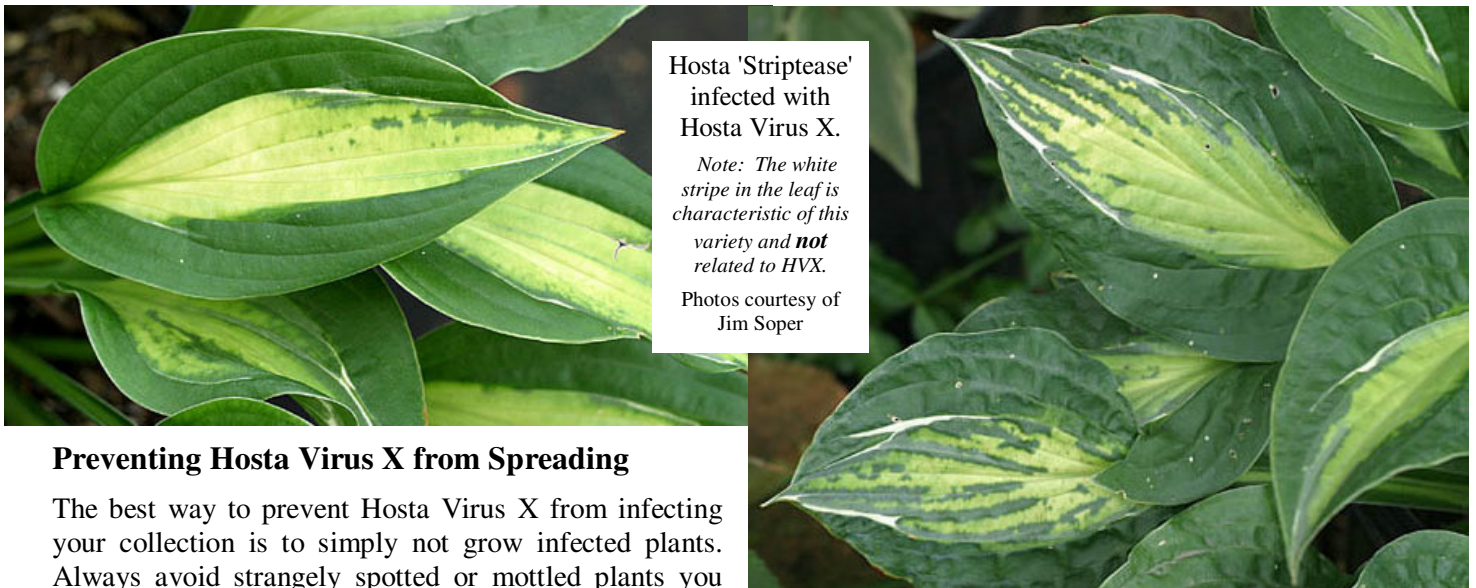
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Symptoms of Hosta Virus X

Hosta Virus X affects different hosta cultivars in different ways, so it is impossible to give a definitive description of symptoms. The most common visual symptom is blue or green markings on a light colored leaf. These markings usually follow the leaf veins and bleed out into surrounding tissue giving the plant a mottled appearance. The tissue often appears lumpy, puckered, and of different thickness or texture than normally colored tissue. Less common symptoms include dried, brown spots and twisted, deformed leaves. It may be difficult to detect off colored mottling on dark, solid colored leaves. Some green tissue will show lighter colored mottling along the veins, but it is not as pronounced as the markings on gold tissue. To make matters worse, some hosta cultivars don't seem to show any visible symptoms of being infected with HVX and it may take 2 to 4 years for symptoms to show after a plant has been infected.



Hosta 'Breakdance' showing typical Hosta Virus X symptoms.
Photo courtesy of Josh Spece



Hosta 'Striptease' infected with Hosta Virus X.
*Note: The white stripe in the leaf is characteristic of this variety and **not** related to HVX.*
Photos courtesy of Jim Soper

Preventing Hosta Virus X from Spreading

The best way to prevent Hosta Virus X from infecting your collection is to simply not grow infected plants. Always avoid strangely spotted or mottled plants you find at nurseries. Not all infected plants show visible symptoms, though, so if one plant in a group shows symptoms do not buy healthy-looking plants in the same group. If one has it, it is very possible some, and maybe all, of the others do. Any plants that came from the large bulk wholesalers should be considered suspect. This includes most hostas found at the "big box" stores. Watch for signs of HVX, don't cut them, and throw them out if any suspicious symptoms appear. Whenever you are dividing or trimming plants, always sterilize your tools using bleach (1:1 bleach/water), rubbing alcohol, ammonia, or Lysol between each plant.

Dealing with HVX Infected Plants

Hosta Virus X infected plants will not recover, so they must be prevented from spreading the disease to healthy hostas. If you have a virus infected hosta in your garden, it should be destroyed. Dig up the plant and send it to the landfill or burn it. HVX has been shown to survive in the soil, so it is best to not plant another hosta in the same spot where an infected plant was removed.

For more detailed information on Hosta Virus X, visit this website: www.inthecountrygardenandgifts.com/articles/hosta_virus_x.php
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