



Spring delights

This month we feature two semi-iridescent varieties, *h.* 'Golden Meadows' and *h.* 'Guardian Angel'.

Both varieties emerge with light coloured centres in the spring, which gradually, depending upon light levels, turn green during the season...



Background

H. sieboldiana 'Elegans' is the plant that links the featured cultivars this month, which are first or second generation sports, and a result of the tissue culture process. They all have near-white flowers, which look whiter against the foliage colour and excellent leaf substance, which is a good defence against pest damage.

H. 'Golden Meadows'

This rather fabulous cultivar is a sport of *h. sieboldiana* 'Elegans'.

Introduced in 2004 from the Netherlands, we have only had this variety for sale for the past couple of years. Our parent plants are beginning to show the potential of the mature plant, which is why we decided to show the plant last year.

The parentage is obvious in characteristics such as leaf shape, colour and puckering. The leaves have excellent substance, which makes it less susceptible to pest damage. The blue-green margins exhibit more texture than the leaf centre, which helps to create a fluted, almost frilly, edge to the leaves. As the centre variegation fades, the texture of the margins, which turn bluer, becomes more apparent and the streaking of the margin colour looks quilted.

As with other iridescent varieties, the variegation gradually becomes less obvious as the season progresses. This was well illustrated when we exhibited the plant at the Malvern Spring Show in early May (top), and then again at Gardeners' World in early June (bottom).



Now Open



The nursery is now open for the season - complete with fresh entrance signs.

We hope to be open all season but may have to close a couple of days. Please check our calendar for the latest details.

Nursery developments

Visitors can currently see the construction of our new collection tunnel.

Designed to be the home of the large and giant varieties, it is located almost opposite the existing collection tunnel. We have been desperate for a bigger covered area for our largest parent plants, so it will be good to get this facility completed.

As a result of the construction of the new tunnel, the collection is being re-organised around size. This work is a major undertaking, as there are over 2,000 varieties in the collection. There are multiple plants of each variety and most of them require re-potting as part of the process.

Funnily enough, it seemed to attract more attention at Gardeners' World, as the variegation faded, with many customers liking the more subtle colouring. However, if you prefer early spring colour then you could consider another sport from *h. sieboldiana* 'Elegans'; ***h. 'Temptation'*** (below).



Although this is described as viridescent, we have found it retains a bright variegation all through the season. It tends to be whiter in the centre with more streaking of the margin colours into the white.

H. 'Guardian Angel'

This cultivar is a sport of *h. 'Blue Angel'*, which has *h. sieboldiana* 'Elegans'

origins. Registered in 1995 as an introduction from America, the characteristics of the parent are obvious in the sport. The leaves of *h. 'Guardian Angel'* are slightly more elongated and the margins are less wide and puckered.



Streaking of the margin colour tends to extend to the midrib, rather like *h. 'Temptation'*, and it tends to have whiter leaf centres early in the season.

Generally we have found the variegation of this cultivar lasts quite a while in the shade of our collection tunnel. The leaf centres seem to mist over as they turn darker. This is an unusual effect and very striking.

The variegation of the cultivars, featured this month, will last much longer if the plants are grown in shadier conditions. Too much light can put the plant under stress, especially in drier conditions. This encourages the plant to revert to green in order to produce more food to feed the roots and survive. So far we haven't experienced any reversion with our collection or sales plants. which suggests they are fully garden-worthy. Although this cannot be guaranteed, ensuring your plants have plenty of moisture and they are not exposed to full sun, for too many hours in the day, should help prevent reversions from occurring.

21-22 April: Plant Heritage Spring Plant Fair Weekend at Hyde Hall, Essex

The first event of the season is fast approaching, where we will be supporting the Essex branch of Plant Heritage. This is followed by Harrogate Spring Flower Show. If you wish to pre-order for collection at a show, please let us know at least 10 days before the start of the show.

Next month: We feature *h. 'Northern Halo'* ...

Exhibition garden

We also need plants for the exhibition garden, when we get the opportunity to begin work on this.

Unfortunately, we are suffering from the effects of the drought, which has turned our clay soil into concrete. It would be silly to start work on this until we get some rain.

We are happy to explain what we are doing and show visitors around.

We can even supply equipment if you fancy getting involved!

We have selected plants for our first show and these are being protected against late frosts.

The excitement of spring is definitely in the air as the sales plants are emerging and looking fabulous, so why not come and see for yourselves?

Spring Special

As part of the re-potting process, we are dividing plants that have multiplied beyond the requirements of the collection.

Therefore, we have a handful of *h. 'Lakeside Sapphire Pleats'* now available for sale:



This is a rarely available cultivar, which has deeply corrugated blue-green leaves. It is a must for anyone with an eye for such heavy texture.

The plant is medium-sized with near-white flowers.

The advice and opinions contained within this monthly newsletter have been formed over more than 35 years of experience with the Hosta genus. We are constantly learning and refining that knowledge and would welcome any suggestions that readers of this newsletter would like to make so please **contact us**.

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