



In this issue

We give you an insight into preparations for the forthcoming season as we get ready to open the gates of the nursery once again. We also introduce our latest deterrent in the fight against pests...

Getting ready

It seems very strange to find ourselves within weeks of our first show without any significant 'down time' this winter. The weather has been so mild we have been able to work through the past few months and catch up with a great deal of maintenance and 'out of season' work, such as benching in the collection tunnels:



Collection Tunnel 2: ready for the season (click to view larger)



Collection Tunnel 1: work in progress (click to view larger)

Website updates

We have also managed to fit in a few enhancements to the website over the winter, including making suggested alternatives for varieties we hold in our collection, which are currently unavailable for sale. We do have almost half of all the varieties available as sales plants. Many of these are superior plants to those we don't have. This is perhaps the best indication of why many varieties simply don't make it to market, being too tricky to mass produce or simply not garden worthy. As visitors to our website will know, it is not an aggressive marketing tool designed to get you to part with your hard-earned cash. It is designed to be a resource to help you plan your purchases and find out more about the genus. You don't need to register, or trust our website with your personal details, you can simply pick up the phone or email us with your order - what could be simpler, other than a visit to the nursery?

Staffing changes

As a family orientated micro-business, there is only so much we can achieve day to day. Each one of us does our bit, and any new mouth to feed needs to earn their keep too - no exceptions...

We are proud to present our own pest 'swat team' (click on image to view):

The nursery is now open

We are delighted to be able to welcome visitors to the nursery again this year. All the sales tunnels are ready for action, with plants in leaf - a huge leap forward from last year.

We plan to open every day, unless something unforeseen occurs. If you are coming any distance it might be worth a quick call beforehand.

Find Me That Plant...

A new app for your smart phone, which will allow you to source plants from trusted nurseries, is due to be launched this month:



Simply download the app to your smart phone to get on the spot access, and identify suppliers of the plants you want, there and then.

All the nurseries involved in the project are RHS

The Magnificent Seven



This highly trained, elite squad of deadly bug snatchers have been busy sweeping the nursery for the past few weeks. Not only have they been entertaining us greatly, they have been putting in the hours with some extensive re-modelling of previously neat piles of compost, wood chips and freshly dug flower beds. We plan to move their barracks from the orchard into the exhibition garden, so they can help with the hard landscaping preparation for planting...

Show preparations

At the start of March we transplanted a range of varieties into growing bags for displaying at Harrogate Spring Flower Show, our first of the season. These are now all sat on row F of Tunnel 1, the warmest spot on the nursery.

Up until five years ago, we used to 'break' dormancy in our selected parent plants in order to encourage them to develop more quickly ready for the start of the season. We did this by applying heat from below on a 'warm bench' in Tunnel 2 until the buds became 'asparagus tips'. The heat was then turned off to allow the shoots to harden and the leaves to unfurl. However, every year this proved problematic because the plants simply didn't emerge as they would normally. Some would shoot up faster than others and then suffer because they were too soft, which also made them more susceptible to slug damage. The results were often disappointing when compared with less advanced parents left to emerge naturally.



Plants at the start of March

Undeterred, we held our nerve this year and stuck by our decision not to break dormancy prematurely. Instead we took our lead from our sales plants and let them dictate which varieties to select for display. Any showing advanced signs of emergence became the natural choice. We now, at the end of the month, have more leaf out than we had by Malvern Spring Show last year, and that was the second week of May!

Not only do we need to plan our displays in advance, we also need to sort out the logistics of the show calendar, ensure we have all our passes booked and accommodation planned for major shows. Local plant sales need to be scheduled and planned for, vehicles ready, sufficient pots and soil medium purchased, and so on. There is a lot of work required before we can start to enjoy the season. We have just completed scanning in maps of where we will be at the major shows this season - take a look at our **Shows page** for the latest information. We are particularly pleased to be located alongside the Floral Marquee at Malvern, and hope the ground will have recovered sufficiently by May, to ensure a good show.

Next month: The 'Sea' series of cultivars...

The advice and opinions contained within this monthly newsletter have been formed over more than 38 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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Medalists, who grow and exhibit their own plants. Most importantly they all have great Mail-Order Services - **see here** for a full list of participating nurseries and a link to download the app, which will be available in time for the Harrogate Spring Flower Show.

The app will be launched at the show, in association with Perennial, who are the 2014 Show Charity:



PERENNIAL provides free, confidential advice, support and financial assistance to people of all ages working in or retired from horticulture and their spouses, partners and children.

If you would like to know more about Perennial, or know someone who needs support, or you would like information on volunteering please go to their website: **www.**

perennial.org.uk

or telephone
0845 230 1839

Perennial is the chosen charity to partner with the app, and will receive 10% of the sale price of each download.

We are delighted to be a part of this project and support the incredibly valuable work of Perennial. We hope you will find the app a very useful tool in sourcing great plants from specialist nurseries.