

April 2024



## *The excitement of spring*

Spring looks to have arrived early this year and the Hosta shoots are responding at a really fast rate. It is such a great sight to see the stock tunnels greening up and the collection plants are also getting in on the action, so much so, we have decided to open the nursery two weeks ahead of the date we originally planned for – check [our website](#) for more details.



## *Phase one of tree planting*

Before we get thoroughly immersed into the new season we have managed to get the first phase of tree planting done at the nursery. It has been tricky, and quite hard work, to get the trees planted. The persistent rain kept delaying progress by topping up the water levels, so we have had to monitor ground conditions on a daily basis to identify any opportunity to plant. As a consequence of the wet we had to dig all the holes by hand to avoid damaging the soil with any heavy machinery. We have had a good work out to start the season with and 27 trees now in the ground:

### **Phase 1 trees**

- 3 x Betula Jac Doorenbos
- 1 x Betula albo. Fascination
- 1 x Betula papyrifera
- 2 x Ginkgo biloba
- 1 x Magnolia x brooklynensis Elizabeth
- 1 x Magnolia grandiflora Gallissoniere (see side column photo)
- 1 x Magnolia x soulangeana
- 1 x Malus floribunda
- 1 x Malus Profusion
- 1 x Malus John Downie
- 1 x Malus Golden Hornet
- 1 x Fagus sylvatica Dawyck
- 1 x Liquidamber styraciflua
- 1 x Syringa vulgaris Ruhm Von Hortenstein

## *Late frosts*

I have been asked about what to do if frosts are forecast.

I have mentioned this subject in previous spring newsletters and, I'll be honest, I don't usually worry as my plants tend to emerge and harden off adequately to protect from all but the deepest frosts. I simply remove any damaged leaves once the frost risk has gone. However, this can be tricky to assess as the last frost of spring 2023 was at the end of May!

If your hosta is emerging quickly with soft leaves, you can fleece them or use an upturned pot to cover the shoots overnight.

Do remember to remove the cover the following day to prevent the plant stretching for light as a result of being undercover.

- 1 x Syringa vulgaris Madame Limoine
- 1 x Syringa vulgaris Ludwig Spath
- 1 x Syringa vulgaris D'Alice harding
- 1 x Sorbus aucuparia Sheerwater
- 1 x Sorbus aria 'Lutescens'
- 1 x Sorbus aucuparia Golden Wonder
- 1 x Acer platanoides Drummondii
- 1 x Sambucus nigra Black Lace
- 1 x Pyrus salicifolia Pendula
- 1 x Cornus Controversa (see side column photo)

Due to the wet winter we were unable to do any further hard landscaping around the reservoir so we have planted the first phase of trees in a more restricted area to enable us to manoeuvre around them and complete the clearance work. We need to finish this so we can plant the second phase around the reservoir. These are all less mature trees and shrubs.

We have logged the position of each tree using [what3words](https://www.what3words.com/) (and GPS coordinates) so we can enter them on the various databases set up to monitor tree planting and Persephony, the Plant Heritage database. Each grid square is 3m x 3m using what3words. It is perhaps more useful to see the size of the felled poplar stumps for a sense of scale:



**Magnolia grandiflora**  
**Gallissoniere**



**Cornus Controversa**



It's a shame the light didn't capture the new red growth, which seemed to glow. It will be exciting to watch the trees develop over time.

### *2024 Events*

All of a sudden it seems the new season has sprung upon us. I have already done my first talk, to Norfolk Plant Heritage. A thoroughly enjoyable afternoon with a great bunch of enthusiastic plant conservationists. It was good to be able to meet up with so many familiar faces from doing



Like all forms of land use, maintenance is critical and although we hate to take trees down, it is important for a variety of reasons.

Occasionally nature intervenes in the process, as Lenore reports:

### Greetings gardeners,

It's been a very interesting winter here in Maine. Some say we didn't have a winter at all. Temperatures were above normal, and many lakes and rivers did not ice over as is typical. We had very little snow, but a great amount of rain and flooding, and very strong winds. Mainers are accustomed to storms from the northeast (called "nor'easters"), but these storms came from the south, and from the northwest.

The first big wind storm, in December, damaged many of the trees on our property, including one of three very old, very large white pines.

The branch that fell to the ground was the size of a large trunk. Tom spent weeks cutting the debris and stacking branches.



In February we were gone for a week, and returned to find much of our lawn, and many large garden beds, piled high with huge branches. Another wind storm had occurred, and now the top 40 feet of that tree had fallen – see opposite. I'm grateful we weren't there to hear the crash.

Garden cleanup will be more challenging this spring, as we continue removing the remains of our beloved pine. Yet we look forward to seeing our hostas emerge, likely early this year, and we will enjoy our gardens once again.

Best to all,

Lenore

It's amazing how much wood is produced from a single tree. Last October, we moved a mountain of wood from the north field to split and sell, and spent much of the wet months doing just that. We easily have the same amount still to collect and we still have around 20 poplars to fell on the eastern boundary of the field. We also have to thin out some trees elsewhere at the nursery. Maintenance never ends!

Team Mickfield Hostas

the Group's events at Hethersett, just to the west of Norwich, each year. I'll be back there on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May.

### Coming up in April...

We have bought forward our first Open Weekend starting on **Friday April 19<sup>th</sup>** – [see website](#) for more details.

If the ground is not too wet visitors will be able to see the newly planted trees and gradual sculpting of the reservoir.

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> April 1-5pm

**Open Day at [Columbine Hall](#)**,  
Stowupland, Suffolk

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April 1-5pm

**[Wyken Hall Plant Fair](#)**  
Stanton, Suffolk

### Lenore's white pines

