



2007 so far...

Well what a year we have experienced so far, a spring heatwave with drought then extensive flooding affecting a large part of the UK. This month's newsletter is dedicated to all our wonderful customers who have not let the appalling weather stop them from enjoying their gardening - **a huge 'Thank You' to you all.**

2007 so far: an exhibitor's perspective

In Suffolk we experienced the hottest, driest April for many years and because there wasn't sufficient rainfall during 2006 to keep the reservoir at a reasonable level, we were unable to water our stock as much as we would have liked. Our first outing of the season was to the Harrogate Spring Flower Show, where we were exhibiting in the Floral Hall but also putting on a leaf display in the Society's marquee. Unfortunately what didn't get plastered in dust, wilted due to the dry atmosphere but luckily our leaf display did hold up for the entire length of the show. Was a dry Harrogate Spring show a portent for the season perhaps...?

Malvern was very wet especially on the final day when the drains simply couldn't cope anymore and the water rose steadily through the ground during the afternoon. We got a severe drenching when breaking down our outside stand and had to return to the caravan to change clothes before taking down the stand in the Floral Marquee.

Gardening Scotland was wet during set-up and overcast for most of the show.

Gardener's World at the NEC was stormy and wet throughout.

Hampton Court Flower Show was a muddy nightmare from start to finish. On a number of occasions the plastic walkways were floating and visitors to the show were being subjected to muddy jets of water bursting up through the gaps, when they trod on elevated sections.

Tatton Park was very similar, though the sun did visit sufficiently throughout the show days to warm the atmosphere a little and increase the humidity level significantly.

So from an exhibitor's perspective this has certainly been a very difficult season with every show providing fresh challenges. However, despite all the problems we can report our best year so far and would like to take this opportunity to thank all our customers - especially those of you who ventured out in appalling conditions to the shows this year. To be honest, the weather bought out the best in people and we seldom saw long faces - indeed a few people seemed to be positively relishing the conditions!

Let's hope we now have something more like a summer and our last remaining shows at Wisley and Harrogate are drier.

Our current bestselling hostas for 2007

Top 3 new cultivars:

1. *H.* 'Winter Snow'
2. *H.* 'Praying Hands'
3. *H.* 'Touch of Class'

Top 3 older cultivars:

1. *H.* 'Sum and Substance'
2. *H.* 'June'
3. *H.* 'Pineapple Poll'

August is the time to enjoy fragrant varieties of hosta...

Here are just a few of our favourites:



H. 'Diana Remembered'



H. 'Emily Dickinson'



H. 'Fragrant Dream'



H. 'Guacamole'

From the gardener's perspective 2007 has also proved extremely challenging weather-wise. Following a very dry 2006 all thoughts were leaning towards drought conditions and what we could do to prevent too much damage to our gardens this year, little expecting that too much wet was around the corner. And like all plants hostas are subject to weather conditions, so we thought this would be a good opportunity to share the advice we have been dispensing to our customers this year, based upon the main queries we have received:

Q: My hosta didn't come through / is not growing very well this year - what has happened?

Most likely cause: the prolonged dry weather of 2006 followed by the premature heatwave during spring and the associated lack of rainfall.

What to do: dig your plant up, or take it out of its container, and check the root system. It may be that there is something weakening the roots, beyond the effects of the weather. Simply get a bucket, add one part of household bleach to 10 parts of water. Soak the roots of your plant for about 15-20 minutes in this weak solution, gently teasing the soil out from between the roots. The bleach will destroy any pathogens that may be lurking in the roots without damaging the plant. Replant your hosta in a fresh mix of compost adding a good amount of grit/sand for easy drainage. Standing your pot in a dish of water allows the plant to take in as much water as it requires.

Q: My hosta leaves are going brown at the edges / turning transparent prematurely - what is happening?

Most likely cause: the weather yet again! Hostas are woodland plants originating in sub-tropical climates so they can cope with heat, diluted sunlight and wet. But they cannot cope with too much wet or intense sunlight - in their natural habitat a canopy of trees takes the impact of monsoon conditions and soaks up most of the rainfall, so that hostas are not sitting in damp conditions for prolonged periods. The trees provide dappled shade, which protects the hostas from sun scorch.

What to do: provide more shelter - pop the plant in a shady situation, which will provide protection from the white heat of the day from 11am through to 3:30pm and will also take the impact of heavy rainfall.

Finally: don't feed your hosta anything more than a seaweed fertiliser or a half-strength mix of Tomorite. Hostas do not require additional feeding and will become quickly exhausted (then die) if given anything overly rich. Many proprietary fertilisers are intended for use on annuals, not perennials.

PSST... slugs and snails don't kill hostas.

Even when pests have apparently eaten all your hosta leaves, the plant is not dead. Simply use a form of pest control and cut off any remaining damaged leaves and very soon new growth will appear. If you are suffering from vine weevil or an unidentified pest problem then dig up your hosta and give it the root treatment mentioned in this newsletter, replant and see what happens.

Next month: Find out more about our nursery and business...



H. 'plantaginea'
(the original species hosta with fragrant flowers)



H. 'Stained Glass'



H. 'Sweetie'

A full list of the fragrant cultivars we have in our collection is available [here](#).

Coming up...

We will be attending the **Harrogate Autumn Show** between 14 - 16 September. If you would like us to bring plant orders up to Harrogate then you will need to let us know before **Friday 7th September** ([How to order](#))

And, do remember that our nursery is open **3 days a week** - we also open outside of these times, if we are working at the nursery. If you wish to visit on a different day then please ring ahead.

The advice and opinions contained within this monthly newsletter have been formed over more than 30 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](#).