



## National Collection

We celebrate the 80th edition of our newsletter with the completion of our National Collection reorganisation and Gold Medal success at Hampton Court Palace Flower Show...

### August at the nursery

We have finally completed the reorganisation of our National Collection. All that is left to do is to design some bigger signs to aid navigation and we are there! Visitors have enjoyed wandering through the new and re-furbished collection tunnels and it has inspired many to add to their own collections. It is always a tough decision what to exhibit when we attend flower shows. Staging a Plant Heritage exhibit is no different. Indeed, it is often more problematic because the genus is so inter-related. We like the opportunity to show our collection to as many people as possible but taking such a large number of cultivars on the road is impossible, which is why it is so good to be able to welcome visitors to the nursery.

### Suffolk success

We were delighted to receive a Gold Medal for our display (click on image below) at Hampton Court in early July.

It was a double success for Suffolk National Collections as our friends Jim Marshall and Sarah Cook were also awarded a Gold Medal, and Best in Marquee, for their display of Malmaison carnations in an Edwardian shop.



### Raising profiles

It was a brilliant show for raising the profile of Plant Heritage. A more prominent position on the showground meant the marquee was always buzzing with visitors and there was plenty of media coverage. Mel was introduced to the Countess of Wessex, who confessed a fascination with hostas, as a result of her brother-in-law's National Collection of large leaved cultivars.

Mel was interviewed by Rachel de Thame on the subject of how to control hosta pests. Off camera Rachel was much more interested in the plants, so it was a shame the researcher wanted to dwell on the commonly perceived problem with

### The 'Old August Lily'

This is the time of year when fragrant varieties come into their own, flowering later than most other hosta cultivars.



All fragrant varieties originate from *h.*

*plantaginea*, which had the common name of 'Old August Lily' because it flowered from August onwards. Fragrant varieties need more sun/warmth to encourage flowering, so they make ideal patio plants. Flowering can continue well into autumn in the right conditions. We are hoping for a lot of flowers this summer, due to the warm weather.

However, they are starting a little later, possibly due to the cold spring and late start to the season. If this is the case then we will be able to make quite a show of these cultivars at the **Wisley Flower Show** in September.

growing hosta, rather than the delight of their infinite variety. According to Rachel, her daughters love to make fairy grottos in the garden, so the miniature varieties are very popular with them.

Jim and Mel also had phone interviews with Lesley Dolphin, for Radio Suffolk. It was great to wave the flag for Suffolk at such a prestigious event. The astute among you will see who gets to do all the PR stuff!

Our exhibit was very well received - click on the images to view. The leaf display element looked particularly good on the BBC footage. As detailed in the **July newsletter**, the display featured a selection of species and the ways breeders have enhanced certain characteristics to produce red petioles, fragrance, colour and so on.

The *h.* **'Sum and Substance'** part of the family tree was particularly striking next to the parent plant and *h.* **'Winter Snow'** in the naturally planted area.

The Tardiana Group featured, with a smattering of the many cultivars in this range.

Miniaturisation has been a key development over the past 35 years. *H. venusta* and *h. nakaiana* were the chosen species to feature and it was clear to see how the characteristics of each have been successfully enhanced in subsequent cultivars. In particular *h. nakaiana* cultivars were all flowering profusely.

Cultivation tips were seized upon, especially those concerning pest control. Hopefully we were able to encourage many more people to reconsider hostas for their gardens.

Our sales area presented a real challenge - how could we show off the range of varieties we were offering for sale in such a small space? Roy had the answer and created a tiered display table - see the photograph on the first page. It looked really good and enabled us to display 70 different varieties! It was particularly effective alongside the leaf display although it did confuse quite a few visitors, who thought it was an extension of the exhibit.

Staging a leaf display in the heat we experienced was tricky. The leaves held up well but we couldn't keep them clean. Being situated between two entrances, in the corner of the marquee, allowed dust to enter and swirl around, alighting on everything, including us. The Tokudama cultivars did suffer more than the others but since they have thick leaves - once they begin to turn, there is no halting the process.



Cultivars from  
*h.* 'Sum and Substance'



The Tardiana Group



Miniatures from *h. venusta* and  
*h. nakaiana*, with cultivation tips

We featured *h. plantaginea* in our **August 2008**

**newsletter**. This focused on cultivars produced from the species. Not all offspring of *h. plantaginea* are fragrant. Indeed it is difficult to detect any fragrance from some, which have been registered as having fragrant flowers.

A full list of fragrant varieties we hold in our collection is available **here**.

#### **National Collection**

James and Carol Coutts have a National Collection of fragrant cultivars and hybrids, in Dumfriesshire. Their gardens are open on selected dates during the year - **find out more**

Meanwhile our nursery will be open through to the end of September.



The late start to the season might result in a late finish. If the plants are still looking good we may decide to keep the nursery open until mid October.

This is the ideal time to establish plants ready for next spring. Find out what else you can see in the locality on our

**Visit Suffolk page**

**Next month:** Suffolk introductions to the genus hosta

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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