



Scorchio...

It seems an age since we compiled the July newsletter, when we were extolling the virtues of hosta flowers and preparing for the July shows. One month later and the hot weather is still with us, but how is it affecting the plants?

Hot and bothered

This is a good phrase to sum up the effects of July this year, both at the shows and at the nursery.

It has been really hard work trying to keep the plants looking fresh and lovely in the poly-tunnels, let alone on the road. Robin and Yvonne have been spending a lot of time watering and maintaining the plants, between customer visits to the nursery. This is exhausting work due to the heat generated in the tunnels, despite their half-net design, having the fans on, and the doors open at either end. What we would have given for a few degrees of this heat last spring when the cold gripped us month after month.

On the road, Roy and David have also spent a lot of time watering stock plants and their displays to keep them looking tip-top. They were especially concerned with all of the Tatton plants having to be stored in the lorry whilst they attended the Stratford Show. They chose to do this to avoid the extra cost of travelling backwards and forwards to each show, preferring to go directly onto Tatton from Stratford. Fortunately they managed to park the lorry in shade for the duration of the show, and the high humidity levels meant the plants didn't have the chance to dry out too much. When Roy and David unloaded the plants at Tatton on the Sunday, they were amazed at how well the plants had fared in such extreme conditions.

Once again the hostas have proved how resilient they can be. We received Gold Medals for both our Hampton Court and Tatton Park displays last month, which was especially gratifying given the conditions we were working in.

Fortunately at Hampton Court this year the dust levels were not as high in the Floral Marquee, as they had been in the Plant Heritage Marquee in 2013.

We had a good position for catching the occasional breeze being situated between two customer entrances and a stock passage, so the show was quite bearable. Also, being at the furthest end of the Marquee from the Palace entrance meant that the crowds had thinned by the time they had negotiated the length of the Marquee, resulting in more room to breathe. It was great to finally get the opportunity to be a part of the Floral Marquee at Hampton Court. Although we have participated in previous years, each time had been the result of a cancellation, so we were less able to prepare and enjoy the experience. It is a tough show to do because of the length of the day and duration of the show, but this year we thoroughly enjoyed it all. We topped and tailed each day with a walk back to the courtesy bus through the Palace grounds or along the Thames, which was welcome joint-easing exercise in one of the most attractive parts of London.

Doing the Hampton Court Flower Show this year was a delight. That could not be said about our experience at the new Stratford Home and Garden Show. We will not



Hampton Court display - [click to view](#)

Customer questions

We have been asked by several customers, at recent shows, whether they are too late to consider planting hostas.

Although many hostas are succumbing to the effects of the summer heat, they have had a good long growing season thus far. Certainly enough to produce the food they need to develop during dormancy.

Seize the moment

As far as our experience shows, we are entering the best time of the year to plant hostas. The leaves are beginning to lose their vibrancy as they have done the work of converting sunlight into sugars to feed the root system. They have either flowered, or are about to flower, marking the point of the season when they consider their work is done. Planting over the next month or two will enable your hostas to settle into their new environment before the onset of dormancy.

Although the hosta year is visibly ending above ground, all the growing effort is being re-directed underground into bud production for next year.

This is an exciting time for us at the nursery as we remove our plants from

dwell on the series of issues we faced at the show, but we will say that the venue was lovely. The grounds of Alscot House are a credit to the various designers and gardeners responsible for their development, with lots of inspiring ideas being implemented in a series of 'garden rooms'. The creation of viewpoints and features lead you to explore the various areas, so that you didn't know what to expect as you move around. Perhaps next year the show organisers will consider allowing visitors access to the gardens as part of their entry ticket, rather than charging them separately for the privilege?

Straight onto Knutsford from Stratford and back to the familiar surroundings of Tatton Park. The heat, which had been quite stifling at Stratford, was still with us further north, but accompanied by a delicious breeze.



Tatton Park display - [click to view](#)

fellow exhibitors' concerns that the show is moving too far away from a Flower Show, and becoming an all-round event to experience, rather than using the opportunity to meet and buy from specialists. We would love to hear some non-exhibitor opinions on the subject - see the box on the right and let Mel know what you think.

Finally, we rolled the Mickfield Hostas Tour Bus to Hyde Hall in Essex.

It was as hot at Hyde as at the previous shows this summer, but it was accompanied by a particularly desiccating wind, which took much of the colour out of the leaves of our display over the five days of exposure.

The layout had changed to take in the view to the new lake, which is rapidly becoming well embedded in the landscape. Our stand was alongside the lake, which afforded us great views of the geese and grebes.

Unfortunately, three RHS Marquees blocked much of the vista from beyond the crossroads. These would have been better situated on the opposite side of the roadway to open up the view and allow visitors to see the whole show area from wherever they were.

The grounds at Hyde Hall are developing beautifully, and it is good to be able to see these changes when we visit. We hope we will be at next year's show but that is up to the RHS. As ever, we will let you know what is happening as soon as we know.

This month we have a two day sale at Great Comp before heading north to Harrogate in September for the last show of our season - check our [shows page](#) for the latest details and links.

This made the show more bearable but the heat was intense and, combined with the glare off the trackway, it was quite uncomfortable for outside exhibitors.

Mel enjoyed her daily 'Potting Bench' talks as they were the best attended thus far, with the most appreciative audiences. Although we had a reasonable show, given the hot conditions and lack of visitors willing to spend on plants, we share our



Hyde Hall display - [click to view](#)

their pots to divide and find the promise of new growth already starting for next season.

This means we can happily divide plants ready for next year. Provided new buds can be separated with sufficient viable root, they will establish rapidly.

This is important for us as most of our varieties are not in commercial production, and cannot be replaced by buying in.

As we have mentioned in previous newsletters, root division is our preferred method of propagation because it produces much stronger, more characterful plants, more quickly than through the process of tissue culture. For more information about these processes, read our [previous newsletters](#).

Share your views

Increasingly we hear people say they are "not buying" at the major flower shows we attend.

This could be due to a number of reasons, many of which exhibitors speculate over endlessly.

What we would really like to know is, what both visitors to the shows, and those who choose not to visit, really think about them.

Mel is a member of the Horticultural Exhibitors' Association and would welcome some insight into the subject. All communications will be treated in confidence so why not [email her](#) and give your valuable opinion.

Next month: [Companion planting: using groups of hostas to great effect...](#)

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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