



## Welcome to the last newsletter in this format

From January 2016 we will be sending out our newsletters as an email, which will link to articles and content on the website...

### Not the last word

It has surprised us that our monthly newsletters have been so popular over the past nine years and we have enjoyed compiling them. However, they are very time-consuming and can be problematic to produce at busy times of the year.



Our first newsletter back in 2007 (opposite) was created before the advent of a lot of the social media we customarily use these days. Not that we are thinking of tweeting and 'liking' all and sundry in our new emails to you. However, there are ways we can make our content more engaging, which is what we aim to do.

From January you will continue to receive a monthly email, which will contain links to updated information on the website, hints and tips and video clips - anything we think you might find interesting about the world of *Hosta*, and our part in it.

We hope this move will bring the content more to life for you. As ever, we will try to make the content accessible and welcome your feedback on what we feature.

### Our 40th anniversary

We have been collecting *Hosta* since 1976, when Yvonne received a gift from a friend who had settled in America. Just for fun we thought we would take a look at cultivars, which were registered in 1976. This is not a guide to which cultivars were actually available and when. Many were known of, and used for breeding purposes, before their date of registration.

**H. 'Blue Heaven'**  
**H. 'Blue Fan Dancer'**



**H. 'Blue Moon'**  
**H. 'Blue Velvet'**



**H. 'Bold Ribbons'**  
**H. 'Chartreuse Wedge'**



**H. 'Chartreuse Wiggles'**

### Why stop a good thing?

We are aware some of our long-standing subscribers like a downloadable PDF each month, so we apologise for the change in format. Please be assured that content will still be routinely created and shared, but when time allows. As part of this change we will be making improvements to the website over the winter to help you find all this information more easily.

### ... to make room for more good things ...

One of the main reasons for this decision is our expectation to be busier than ever during 2016, our 40th year of collecting *Hosta*. Over the past 40 years the genus *Hosta* has exploded in the number of cultivars available. Who would have thought there would ever be so many, and who would have guessed their popularity?

Over the past nine years of our newsletters we have shared information about all the different activities we undertake in order to operate our micro-business. We have also tried to help customers navigate this rapidly growing world of choice by sharing our experiences of growing *Hosta*, warts and all.

### What exactly do we do?

The image overleaf is a table of the activities we engage in at Mickfield Hostas, which we thought might be quite interesting to share - at least it shows what we are up to 'out of season'. It also includes key cultivation activities for your consideration as gardeners and designers, working with these wonderful plants.



Another 'good thing' on the horizon:  
***Hosta* 'Coloured Hulk'**

This *H. 'Whirlwind'* look-a-like keeps its vibrant variegated colour all season - a great improvement for those who love the dark veins against the white leaf centres...

(Larger version attached to email)

Activities	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Day to day business operation	Accounts, stock control, ordering, suppliers, banking, tax & insurance, capital plant, hiring, compliance, etc. etc											
Customer communications	Order taking, advice given and all other forms of customer engagement via phone, email and in person at the nursery											
Order fulfillment	Invoicing & payment processing, selection of plants, preparation, health-check, packaging and posting											
Website	Maintenance, copy writing, newsletters, updates, photo processing, etc											
Nursery												
National Collection activities	Cataloguing and maintaining our NC. Support of the Suffolk Group and occasional involvement with PH HQ.											
Dividing and care of sales plants	Ongoing throughout the season											
Dividing and care of collection plants	Ongoing care of collection											
Nursery maintenance	Construction/organisation jobs			Routine maintenance during season				Construction/organisation jobs				
Dead-heading/cleaning	Routine dead-heading and cleaning											
Pest control	Slugs & snails		Vine weevil									
Nursery visits: hosting individuals & groups	Daily from Thursday to Monday (closed Tuesdays & Wednesdays)											
Shows												
2016 shows and plant sales	Preparations for 2016 shows			Plant selection, logistics, packing, building, show days, etc								
Show planning for 2017	Applications & decisions for 2017											
HEA Committee	Regular meetings, correspondence, website maintenance and liaison between exhibitors and show organisers											
Promotional activities												
External and affiliated organisations	Articles, communications and initiatives with BHHS, AHS, HEA, RHS, NGS, PH and others											
Talks to gardening clubs and societies												
Plant Finder update												Annual

  

<b>Key</b>	
BHHS	British Hosta and Hemerocallis Society
AHS	American Hosta Society
RHS	Royal Horticultural Society
NGS	National Garden Scheme
PH	Plant Heritage
HEA	Horticultural Exhibitors' Association

### Tempering our advice

Anyone working with the elements will appreciate, many of the nuts and bolts activities of the business require certain weather conditions and this can be one of the most difficult variables to accommodate in our plans.

Therefore, there are grey areas of timing when, for example, we could be dividing plants into December one year, but forced to stop in early October in another.



**Hosta 'Ruffed Up'**

This beautiful cultivar will be available from us, for the first time, next year...

Fortunately, the past few years have seen mild autumns and we have been able to maximise our propagation efforts.

Obviously we are dividing and storing our plants under cover and, although our tunnels do not protect the plants from deep frosts, it is a more temperate climate at both ends of the season. This allows us to sometimes start earlier and finish later but our advice to customers is to do any dividing between April and September - not too early or too late in the season.

Gardening is not prescriptive and much of what we learn is adapted through our own experiences and understanding the individual nature of every garden. A good example of this is pest control.

Slugs emerge when the weather warms up and this can range from January through to April, so slug control needs to be done when the weather warms.

We find February is usually the best month for this but we no longer treat our *Hosta* for slug damage as this is always minimal. Snails tend to emerge slightly later, when frosts have all but gone, so to avoid early damage to emerging plants initiate your control regime around March-April.

We tend to find snail damage can occur during the late summer, when flower heads go over. The snails are attracted to the enzymes given off during the decaying process.

Vine weevil is the most problematic pest to deal with due to their continuous breeding throughout the season and you can find both adults and grubs at their various developmental stages throughout the warmer months. Although they do minimal root damage to the majority of varieties, you should check miniatures because their root systems tend to be much finer and more susceptible to weevil damage.

**Next month:** Look out for our new format newsletter...

- H. 'Golden Prayers'
- H. 'Golden Rajah'
- H. 'Golden Ruffles'
- H. 'Golden Waffles'
- H. 'Golden Wheels'
- H. 'Green Wedge'



**H. 'Hadspen Blue'**



**H. 'Hadspen Heron'**



- H. 'Harmony'
- H. 'High Fat Cream'
- H. 'Little Blue'
- H. 'Paintbrush'
- H. 'Oxheart'
- H. 'Peek-A-Boo'
- H. 'Purple and Gold'
- H. 'Resonance'
- H. 'Wahoo'
- H. 'Yellow Splash'

A couple of interesting things emerged from this exercise:

1. most of the cultivars are plain leaved
2. there is a lack of exotic names in the list. Registrants seemed to prefer to acknowledge characteristics as the basis for naming back in the 1970s.

If you fancy discovering if and when a specific cultivar was registered, you will find the information on the excellent **Hosta Register**.

The advice and opinions contained within this monthly newsletter have been formed over more than 39 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**.