



# MICKFIELD HOSTAS



## What will be popular in 2019?

As our forward calendar of shows comes together, it is also the time of year to start planning which plants to feature. As ever, it's a juggling act trying to balance the potential of newer varieties with the tried and tested.

### "All the glitters is not gold"

With over 40 years of experience we can safely say that it is still remarkably difficult to predict what might be popular with the buying public. The same goes for making judgements on what might be a good plant to add to our collection, and subsequently offer for sale.

It was especially difficult this year as there is a wealth of new varieties we could take a punt on, which have varying degrees of colour coming up through the petioles and into the leaves. We decided to stick with those cultivars with wonderfully colourful petioles and managed to attract a lot of attention with them. Interest peaked around Gardeners' World' in June, when [H. 'Paradise Island'](#) was featured in the BBC coverage.

### Introducing red into the leaves

So far we have added quite a few cultivars with red/purple petioles to our collection - [see list](#), but struggle to see the beauty in those where the colour is carried into the actual cell layers of the leaves. In our opinion, there has yet to be one with red tinged leaves that we find attractive, whereas we feel the purple end of the spectrum is more eye-catching.

How these varieties will actually grow successfully, and for the longer term given the reduction of green in the leaves, has yet to be determined. Often newly introduced varieties are still full of

## Garden project

The photo at the head of the newsletter, taken in 2017, shows the reservoir alongside the packing shed. It's clearly extremely overgrown as you cannot define the edges, let alone see any water in it.

Work on clearing the reservoir banks continues apace. [Visit the web page](#) for more information.



You may recognise this image of [Hosta 'June Spirit'](#), which we used in a poster for the 2018 show displays.

We love the vibrancy and sheen of the foliage and,

hormones from the tissue culture propagation process and until they have left the plant, its inherent strength is unproven. This is why we add varieties to our collection and observe their potential before we introduce them to the public and promote them as good growers.

We feel there has been too much of a rush to market with certain varieties over recent years. We have been seduced into doing this ourselves in the past as there is always pressure from the media and public for 'the new'.

### **So, how do we decide what to go for?**

The decision making process cannot be exclusively guided by what the general public might go for as invariably it is for the brightest, whitest, most 'blingy' varieties. Instead we like to add a selection of brightly coloured foliage tempered with cultivars people should not overlook.

A balanced display needs to feature plants that act as 'foils' for more elaborate foliage colours. These foils usually last far longer than the 'bling' due to their inherent superior growing characteristics.

As a result, we consider the following three questions when we make our choices;

**Pedigree:** does a new cultivar come from a proven line of the genus and thus more able to maintain characteristics whilst be a good grower?

**Colour:** does the colour of a new cultivar vary/remain the same throughout the season and is it sufficiently different to mark it out from the rest on maturity?

**Shape and form:** does the cultivar move the genus on from what is already available and in such a way as to mark it out as a potential modern classic?

To date we find it hard to resist cultivars that are related to members of the Tardiana group of *Hosta*, such as [H. 'Halcyon'](#) and [H. 'June'](#). Cultivars from [H. 'Sum and Substance'](#) and those from the species [H. montana](#) also attract our attention.

These days we are much more sceptical about some of the miniature and small varieties, such as the 'Mouse' series and tend to only add them to the collection for observation.

We have highlighted a couple of new choices, and an old favourite, for 2019 in the side column and will update our availability list in January - something to look forward to in the New Year.

as an offspring of the Tardiana Group of the genus, it is a robust and reliable grower.



[Hosta 'Timeless Beauty'](#) is a sport of [H. 'Catherine'](#), which in turn originates from [H. 'Halcyon'](#), part of the Tardiana group of the genus. This cultivar has elegantly elongated leaves and fine white leaf centres. Given its parentage, and how it has grown for us since adding it to our collection, we are happy to offer it for sale in 2019.



[Hosta 'Maui Buttercups'](#) was greatly admired at the Tatton Park show. We decided to show this plant to highlight its colour and form in its offspring [H. 'Rainforest Sunrise'](#), which we couldn't show because it had been scorched where it was in the collection tunnel. We assumed visitors would be more interested in its

Meanwhile, we wish you a relaxing and enjoyable festive holiday and look forward to 2019.

Team Mickfield Hostas

variegated offspring but visitors were more keen on the intense colour, texture and shape of this little lovely - what do we know!

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