



Our 2008 Show calendar

This month we look at the shows we are planning to attend during 2008 and give you a flavour of what it takes to participate in a show. We also invite you to visit our nursery and make a few suggestions for [other places to visit](#) in our lovely county of Suffolk...

2008	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	Show
Apr		1	2	3	4	5	6	
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Harrogate Spring
	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	
May	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Malvern Spring
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	NCCPG Plant Sale
	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	
Jun	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	NCCPG: Heritage Day
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Gardener's World Live
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
Jul	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Hampton Court
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Tatton Park
	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	
Aug	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
Sep	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Harrogate Autumn
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	NCCPG Plant Sale
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	

We will applying for Wisley so do check our [show dates](#) in future to see if our application has been successful. As you will see we are planning to do the same shows as last year but with one exception, Gardening Scotland...

Gardening Scotland

Our apologies to our customers in Scotland because we can no longer support the Gardening Scotland Show. Unfortunately, we cannot escape the economics and Scotland is a long way for us to come at a time of year when we really need to be at the nursery to encourage visitors to see our collection at it's best.

Our sale plants

We do not sell 'plugs' - the tiny specimens often straight out of tissue culture that some organisations are happy to sell, often in offer packs. We feel the risk of a plant failing is too great.

We like to know that our plants are showing the characteristics they will develop as they mature so our customers can be confident of their purchases. Therefore, our plants are potted on in containers varying from 0.5 to 5 litres in size, depending upon the ultimate size of the particular plant.

Bare-rooted plants

Hostas are happy to spend a while bare rooted during the growing season, which makes them great plants for mail order. Removing the soil and washing the roots is the human equivalent of a day at a health spa.

Doing this not only drastically reduces the cost of postage it readies the plant for potting into fresh growing medium on receipt. It also helps control pests such as vine weevil.

So what does it take to put on a show?

Preparations for the show season begin in the previous year when applications need to be made for the shows we wish to attend. Over the years we have identified different approaches for different shows to minimise expenses and maximise our opportunity to talk to our customers. For example, we prefer to do flower hall/marquee exhibits at Harrogate, Malvern and Tatton. All the other shows we do in plant malls, which is the most expensive way to exhibit.

We try to tie our exhibit stock to our sales stock as much as possible so that customers can see what their plants will look like when mature.

The main advantage of plant mall sites is the proximity of storage for our sales stock - usually behind our selling tables. Having our stock easily to hand means we can spend more with our customers and less time dashing around retrieving stock.

At the Malvern Spring Show we exhibit in the marquee and have a plant mall. We have a couple of lovely ladies who help us out each year and are planning to join us again in 2008.

Gearing up for the show

As we have so many different varieties for sale we have to make some tough decisions about what to take with us - space on the lorry and storage space at the shows limit us severely.

We have to leave the nursery up to a week before the start of a show to allow sufficient time to set up and build our stand exhibit.

It usually takes several days to gather the exhibit plants, assemble the sales stock, check it is all labelled and load it onto the dutch trolleys. The quality of stand materials supplied by the shows often leaves a lot to be desired so we need to spend time thinking about the materials we might need to fix the stand before we can begin building the exhibit!

At the show

Over the years we have experimented with many ideas and ways to exhibit hostas, both in naturalistic and stylistic forms. We even used the Japanese methods of showing the entire plant, root and all, using glass containers. It takes a good deal of time and muscle stretching to stage an exhibit but it is worth all the effort to hear the positive feedback from our customers.

Show days can be very long and we are often on our stands at least half an hour before the start of the show. Next time you attend a Gala evening spare a thought for the exhibitors, who have already been on their feet all day.

Our customers are the stars - despite the most atrocious weather they keep on smiling and enthusing about plants.

After the show

Although it is sad to dismantle the lovely stands, it is good to be off home. Then we have to turn round and do it all again - phew!

PSST... have you started combatting those pests yet?

Now is the time to begin targetting those grey-brown slugs that emerge from hibernation alongside the first shoots of your beautiful hostas - [find out more](#).

Next month: We look at older varieties and our involvement with the NCCPG

Hosta futures

Just like all 'futures' trading we like to gauge public reaction to new varieties not yet available for sale. We do limit this to varieties we are fairly confident will be available within a short time, for example, during 2007 we introduced:

- **Southern Gold** and **Medusa** in a leaf display at the Harrogate Spring Show
- **Essence of Summer** in the NCCPG stand at Gardener's World,
- **Popcorn, Blue Blush** and **Dark Star** at the Harrogate Autumn

... and all these lovelies are available for sale this year.

Calling all Garden Designers

We are often asked to supply garden designers with plants and have had some potentially good commissions fall through because of a lack of understanding about how long it takes for a plant to mature. Hostas are not unique in taking a few years to become their expected size, trees take a lot longer!

We recommend, for any specific plant request, that a sensible lead time is allowed - that doesn't mean requesting a plant in October and expecting it to be fully mature in time for Chelsea the following year.

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](#).