



Welcome to our newsletter

We aim to keep this publication brief but use it to provide information and advice around the subject of hostas. We are keen for this newsletter to be driven by our customers so we welcome any suggestions you might have to improve the format or content and ideas you may have for articles. In particular we would like this to be a forum through which we can answer your questions so please do [get in touch with us](#).

2007 is promising to be an exciting year for Mickfield Hostas and we will be introducing some new developments over the course of the spring - more details will follow in future newsletters. Do return to the website again soon as we are currently updating it with missing plant descriptions and the addition of more than 300 new varieties.

Let's hear it for hostas

Hostas are essentially woodland plants and flourish best in shady, well-drained (but not dry) soil.

Hostas enjoy a long season, usually emerging in April, and will continue to give pleasure long after other plants have died back. Indeed, many of the fragrant varieties come to their peak towards late summer.

- **Spring** growth is a welcome sight, as the new shoots poke their heads above the chilly soil. Even at this stage, the different varieties are striving to show off their individuality.
- **Summer** is abundant as the hostas mature and the full value of them as architectural and accent plants, comes to the fore.
- **Autumn** colour is glorious with most varieties giving a last flourish before entering their dormant phase, which last year wasn't until mid-November.

Creating shade

The problem of shade is easily overcome by under-planting existing shrubs and trees with hostas. If your garden is devoid of shady areas then perhaps pots are a good way to house your hostas until other planting has matured enough for you to pop your hostas in the ground. Pots can be left alongside walls and fences out of direct sun - indeed why not locate some pots under pergolas and grow some vigorous climbers, such as ivy or clematis to provide shade. We have done this to great effect, even using patio umbrellas in the heat of the day!

Hostas look equally stunning in pots but you must ensure they do not dry out - they are less demanding on water than hanging baskets but should be watered at least a couple of times a week. Water more often when the weather is as dry and hot as we experienced last year.

Although hostas have enjoyed the number one perennial spot in the USA for many years, there is still some reluctance with UK gardeners to give them a go.

This is a great shame because they are so versatile.

Pots are a good way for you to experiment with the location of your hostas without the need to keep digging them up to move them.

2007 Show Season

The following details the shows we are currently planning to attend this year:

April 26-29
Harrogate Spring

May 10-13
Malvern Spring

June 1-3
Gardening Scotland

June 13-17
Gardener's World Live

July 3-8
Hampton Court

July 18-22
Tatton Park

July 28-29
Llangollen

September 14-16
Harrogate Autumn

September 29-30
Malvern Autumn

Hosta care

Hostas are extremely tolerant plants but you cannot expect them to sit in water for prolonged periods or bake in full sun. Having said that, some varieties are proving able to withstand full sun, as we found during last year's show season.

Experience suggests to us that if a hosta has cool roots and adequate moisture, it will take a reasonable amount of early morning and late afternoon sun. However, if you prefer the blue cultivars then the more shade you can give them the better as this is what allows the bloom to develop on the leaves.

If your hosta is showing signs of stress, i.e:

- the leaves have developed brown edges
- there is a proliferation of small leaves in the centre of the plant mound
- flowering is occurring before the leaves have emerged (if this happens, remove the flower head above the first pair of leaves)

Don't be afraid to split the plant as splitting is easy and the plants re-establish quickly, so before long you will have several plants from that single purchase.

Infinite variety

Many hostas change colour and/or variegation throughout the season - there are special terms for this:

- **Viridescent:** varieties that begin the season with a distinct variegation and gradually lose it as the season progresses.
- **Lutescent:** varieties that begin the season with plain leaves, which then develop variegation as the season progresses. Many lutescent varieties have the added bonus of fragrant flowers.
- **Albescent:** varieties which become paler as the season progresses.

It is often difficult to choose with so many varieties now commercially available. If you are at a loss then do consult us as we would be happy to try to steer you towards varieties that suit your growing conditions and demands. The best way to do this is to visit us at the nursery where we can spend some time with you. This year we are opening the nursery most Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays unless we are all at shows and we welcome visitors outside of these times by appointment - see side column for dates.

We look forward to seeing you this year.

psst...

Buyer beware!

Newly registered hostas can take as long as twenty years to become commercially available.

Therefore, if a new variety is heralded as the 'must have' hosta for 2007 you could spend a lot of time on a wild goose chase to track one down for sale.

Next month: Pest control... our experience with slugs and snails!

Pre-order to collect at shows

If you would like to order plants for collection at a show you are attending then do let us know at least 10 days in advance. We need to leave for the shows several days before they commence in order to have time to set up our displays, etc.

We often get phone calls when we are already on our way or already at the show so we will use this column to remind you of the dates nearer the time.

Nursery Open Dates

We can accommodate visits outside of these dates - please contact us to arrange.

April

5-7, 12-14, 19-21

May

3-5, 17-19, 24-26

June

7-9, 21-23, 28-30

July

12-14, 26-28

August

2-4, 9-11, 16-18, 23-25, 30-31

September

1, 6-8, 13-15, 20-22, 27-29

October

4-6, 11-13, 18-20, 25-27

The very latest details of shows and nursery opening times are available on our website - [click here](#)

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](#).