



Happy New Year

Welcome to our eighth year of newsletters with a preview of the 2014 season.

This month we will bring you up to date with the shows we are attending, key trends we think will continue into 2014, and highlight a few of the cultivars we plan to have for sale...

Key trends in 2014

Last year saw more wild and woolley weather for many parts of the UK, underlining our obsession with what the weather can throw at us.

Four seasons in one day can actually happen, which is why we have been promoting container growing. We predict this to be an ever more popular method of growing plants in UK gardens, due to the flexibility it gives the gardener to ring the changes and exert some form of control over the elements.

Our **container growing page** has proved a popular resource for our customers, with many of them trying out some of the mixed planting ideas we illustrate.



In support of this trend we are focusing the choice of plants we offer to feature more 'statement' plants. An excellent example of this is *H. 'Neptune'*, which is a fantastically coloured cultivar. The blue-green leaves take on a slightly bleached appearance between the veins. This colouring, combined with the wavy leaf margins gives the impression of water. The leaves grow evenly outwards in a wide-spreading set of layers and it is an excellent grower. Our own *H. 'Neptune'* wasn't sitting outside the back door for long in 2013, before it was snaffled for the Suffolk Show,

where we promptly sold all we had available. We also plan to have more *H. 'Blue Cascade'*, a similar shaped variety which caused quite a stir at Malvern in 2012 for its deep blue, wavy-edged leaves.

Architectural cultivars tend to be better suited to containers, which show them off to best advantage. A good example of this is *H. 'Cold Heart'*, which we first exhibited at Malvern Spring in 2011 (see left image) when it went un-noticed.



Last year we popped the same plant into a pot as a feature in the display (see right image) and customers went mad for it.

On the road in 2014

Once again we plan to take our plants on a tour of the UK. We are still waiting to hear from show organisers about some of the events but our calendar currently looks like this:

24-27 April

Harrogate Spring

We will be in our usual spot in Hall 1, GH1/39

4 May

Woottens of Wenhaston

Garden Fair

8-11 May

Malvern Gardening

Spring Show

We have applied for a Plant Village pitch and hope to confirm this in next month's newsletter.

28-29 May

Suffolk Show

11-15 June

RHS Flower Show

Birmingham at BBC

Gardeners' World Live

We will be on stand FM89 in 2014, which is very close to the Plant Creche in the Floral Marquee

8-13 July

RHS Hampton Court

Palace Flower Show

We will be in the Floral Marquee on stand FM88,



Varieties with dramatic coloured petioles are best shown off in containers, or at the edge of a border. **H. 'China Girl'** is one of the best red-stemmed varieties we have yet offered. The image on the left shows the plant at the Suffolk Show situated beside a bridge, allowing visitors to clearly see the red stems.

Although it was frustrating not to have as much foliage out on display during last year's cold spring, it was a rare chance for us to draw visitor's attention to the beauty of the stems.

Spatial challenges

Another key trend we have seen developing over recent years is the determination of people, lacking traditional gardens, to make the most of the space they do have. More people are successfully beautifying their homes on the outside as well as on the inside, and taking pride in contributing to shared spaces and community gardens, despite their own lack of a traditional garden.

Once again containers are a great source of inspiration in this environment, enabling gardeners to be creative in minimal space. Hostas do well in hanging baskets and wall-mounted planters too, just remember to water regularly as you would with any other plant in such conditions.

An important trick to learn in smaller spaces is how to maximise the potential of each plant, to contribute to the overall look of an area. Don't be tempted to crowd an area with too many brightly coloured/variegated plants, which will all be vying for attention at the same time. Instead try thinking about seasonal variations so that each plant can be admired in its own right.

We are very excited to be able to offer a perfect plant for late summer/autumn variegation in 2014, **H. 'Beckoning'**. This cultivar emerges with plain blue/green leaves, which then develop centre lutescence during the season. We are always happy to advise on good combinations, some of which we have used in our displays - see our **combination planting page** for some ideas

We have also had quite a number of enquiries concerning large area planting. There seems to be a trend towards celebrating the seasonality of planting, to have large planting areas, which go dormant in time for autumn colour. This is a good idea in mature woodland. Over the past couple of years we have sold increasing numbers of large/giant varieties, especially at our nursery, as visitors are able to see mature, albeit container grown,



examples which we cannot exhibit within the confines of a marquee display. We expect this trend to continue as we plant out our exhibition garden, allowing the larger varieties to spread their roots. Among the newer varieties we can offer in 2014 is a particularly intriguing cultivar called **H. 'Seducer'**. This giant variety displays such a seductive colour combination, which we absolutely adore - what do you think?

Keep an eye out on our website over the next few weeks as we update our availability list for 2014 - we will have both new and established varieties for sale together with the return of some old favourites...

Next month: We will share our 2014 availability list and preview more plants...

which is right at the far end of the marquee

23-27 July

RHS Flower Show Tatton

Park

This year we will be on stand FM42 on the left hand side of the marquee

9-10 August

The Great Comp

Summer Show, Kent

12-14 September

Harrogate Autumn

Flower Show

We will be adding further shows to the list, as they are confirmed over the next few months, so keep an eye on the **Show**

Calendar for the latest information.

New for 2014

We are planning to go on the road delivering talks.

If you are involved in a club, group or society within East Anglia, and have an interest in hostas, running a specialist nursery, holding a National Collection, or exhibiting at flower shows, Mel would be delighted **to hear from you**. She is happy to share her experiences and would like to have an idea of topics people are more interested in to enable her to tailor talks to your requirements.

Keep an eye on our website for more details...

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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