



Identifying hostas Part 4

This month we feature *H. 'Fortunei'* types, which form a large section of the genus, once again with uncertain origins, but with some useful identifying characteristics...

That's a 'Fortunei' type

I often describe [*H. 'Fortunei'*](#) as *hosta bog-standicus* as it represents a typical hosta. In general it has:

1. An even habit of medium sized leaves on a medium to large layered mound
2. Leaves that are not thick in substance or deeply corrugated in texture
3. Pale to mid lavender flowers on tall scapes



However, this particular cultivar, and its contemporaries, have been responsible for many beautiful, classic offspring.

There are two key branches of offspring in particular, which have produced numerous very popular modern cultivars:

1. [*H. 'Francee'*](#), among all the white and margined sports of *H. 'Fortunei'*, this one has proven an excellent parent for producing offspring with ever more white in the leaf.
2. [*H. 'Gold Standard'*](#), a variegated sport of *H. 'Fortunei'* *Hyacinthina'*, which has gone on to produce some of the most interesting variegations yet developed.

Hosta 'Francee'

This cultivar is responsible for a range of cultivars with varying degrees of white in the leaf, from the centre to the margin.

Other *H. 'Fortunei'* types

There are several cultivars with the prefix 'Fortunei'.

Many have been confused over time, or sold with a different name and some have been renamed. Of these the most commonly grown is probably [*H. 'Fortunei Aureomarginata'*](#) (below).



This cultivar is great for mass plantings where it really can show off. It may be an old variety but it can still attract attention. We sell this variety separately from [*H. 'Fortunei Obscura Marginata'*](#), which is supposedly one and the same. However, in our experience the latter has a much richer colouring and streaks of grey between the margin and leaf centre colours (see below):



Arguably the most popular sport of [H. 'Francee'](#) is [H. 'Patriot'](#) (below). This has to be the best white margined hosta produced to date for its reliability and impact.



Not only are the margins much wider, the leaf substance is thicker making it less susceptible to scorching. If you want a strong hit of white in your planting, this is the best cultivar to achieve that. There are some offspring that are less robust than others, usually white centred cultivars. In general, white margined cultivars are stronger growers than white centred ones. A great example of this is [H. 'Fire and Ice'](#).

Established plants will perform well but it can be a struggle to get it to maturity. It is eye catching but has a really dark green margin, which can get lost in a shady area, where a white margin will stand out better.

Hosta 'Gold Standard'

This cultivar has produced perhaps the widest range of colour combinations, and striking variegations, from any one hosta.

[Hosta 'Gold Standard'](#) develops more intense colouring as the season progresses and can have quite beautifully textured leaves as it matures – it is a real treat.



Hosta 'Fortunei Albomarginata'

A white margined cultivar, which has been eclipsed over time by much more vibrant white margined versions from the same stable – see opposite under *H. 'Francee'*.

Hosta 'Fortunei Albopicta'

This cultivar has a lovely bright leaf centre in spring, which fades to all green by autumn.

Hosta 'Fortunei Hyacinthina'

This cultivar has a beautiful blue-grey bloom to the leaf during the first part of the season, which it retains longer if in a cool, shady spot. The leaves often curl upwards at the margins, rather than down as with other 'Fortunei' types:



Hosta 'Fortunei Hyacinthina'

has been a good source of interesting offspring, most of which exhibit variations on the theme of a green leaf with a white, yellow or gold margin. However, there are three stand out cultivars:

Hosta 'Gold Standard'

I cover in the main body of the newsletter opposite, which



Many of its offspring also change colour across the season and some actually change colour completely from margin to centre. Also, the colour borders on the leaves can be so intricate with margins looking like they have been painted on. Yvonne's favourite [H. 'Moonlight'](#), illustrates this effect beautifully (below).



Perhaps the most interesting sport of *H. 'Gold Standard'* is [H. 'Striptease'](#) (below).



The variegation looks like a leaf within a leaf and most offspring of *H. 'Striptease'* display these markings with varying clarity, in a broad range of colours. Some of the variegations are simple, such as [H. 'Gypsy Rose'](#) and [H. 'Risky Business'](#) and some can be quite complex, such as [H. 'Snake Eyes'](#).

A particularly interesting sport is [H. 'Yellow Polka Dot Bikini'](#), which has a lovely yellow margin and green centre in spring (below)

has produced a lot of very beautiful cultivars.

[Hosta 'Whirlwind'](#) for the way in which the leaf centres colour up starting with the veins, and [H. 'Praying Hands'](#), which doesn't really look like a traditional hosta – both below.

Hosta 'Whirlwind'



This is a delightful cultivar which changes colour as the season progresses. Starting creamy white in the leaf centre with a green midrib. The veins gradually turn green from the midrib and the leaf centres appear to colour in after that.



By late autumn the colouring is much more subtle.

H. 'Praying Hands'

Although the originator of this most unusual cultivar registered *H. 'Praying Hands'* as having unknown parentage.

It has been suggested that *H. 'Fortunei Hyacinthina'* is a



By autumn the colours swap over to a green margin with gold centre in autumn. The photo below (Hyde Hall 2022) captures the change as it starts to happen around late summer.



As you can see, the underlying characteristics of *H. 'Fortunei'* carry through into subsequent generations of cultivars.

I have mentioned only a handful of wonderful sports so do take a look at our newsletter archive and the Hosta Library for more examples of 'Fortunei' types to get a feel for the characteristics they share.

Next month we will look at identifying some of the small and miniature hostas. Until then, keep warm.

Team Mickfield Hostas

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likely parent.



When we first purchased a small consignment of this cultivar from America many years ago, all but one of the plants remained characteristic. The one which didn't sported a look very much like *H. 'Fortunei Hyacinthina'*. We put a holding name of [*H. 'Eastern Spires'*](#) on it and it has remained open leaved.

Anecdotally, we were informed that the reason it took a while for *H. 'Praying Hands'* to become more commercially available was due to problems in tissue culture and the loss of the characteristically furled leaves.

The leaves are very tough and fairly pest resistant. The veins are particularly strong, which helps the leaves stay erect. It is an instantly recognisable cultivar and makes a statement wherever it is used. We would recommend it is 'grown on' in a container for the first few years until it establishes a broader root structure to cope in the ground.