



# MICKFIELD HOSTAS



## The latest 'must have' plant?

It is rather unusual to find hostas at the top of visitors' agendas at the flower shows, at least this is what they are telling us.

Recent television coverage has helped encourage people to look at hostas again and spend less time agonising over slug and snail damage - naturally we welcome this but feel that it has taken rather a long time for the media to stop dwelling on the negative aspects of growing these wonderful plants.

Perspective is all important in gardening, so expectations of perfection will always leave you disappointed. It is better to aim for balance and adopt a more relaxed approach to gardening to get the most pleasure from the pursuit.

## Weather effects...

This is the time of year when we start to receive queries regarding unusual leaf dis-colourations. Usually the photos people send us show the effects of weather, which can look like the threat of a virus.

## Older leaves

The first thing to remember is that the leaves have already been out for three months, which is a long time for them to look pristine. The older leaves sometimes scorch or start to look less vibrant. Once a leaf starts to lose its colour, it has done the work and can be removed. This encourages new leaf formation, which then helps the plant produce more sugar to feed the roots over the winter and generate the, all

## Flowering

The collection tunnels are starting to display their layer of flowers above the leaves.

At this stage of the year it adds a lavender haze, which is quite lovely.

Although most hosta flowers are shades of lavender, there are quite a few with white, or nearly white flowers. There are also a number of varieties with fragrant flowers ([see our list](#)) but these tend to produce their flowers later into August and September.

If you like these larger flowers then cultivars from the *H. sieboldiana* part of the genus are the ones to go for. They are generally slower growing cultivars with characteristically large flowers grouped at the top of thick flower scapes. You can find out more by looking back through our [newsletter archive](#) to special feature issues.

important, new growth for next year.

### Overhead watering

Sometimes leaf damage can be the result of too frequent overhead watering, which can start to cause rot in the crown, especially when the weather turns hot and humid. Once again we suggest that if your plants are container grown, stand them in shallow trays and water from below as much as possible.

### Bleeding/bleaching effect

The strange spring weather we had again this year caused more 'bleeding' of colour in the cell layers of some varieties, which already exhibit this characteristic as part of their unique identity. These varieties have already recovered their colour as expected but some go on to develop it during the season as a matter of course, such as [H. 'Neptune'](#).

Interestingly, if you watch the video of the display at Gardeners' World you will see some varieties with colour bleeding and bleaching in the cell layers. Both [H. 'Amy Elizabeth'](#) and [H. 'Gold Drop'](#) have slightly bleached older leaves, the newer leaves are more vibrant.

This happens most years with varieties from that part of the genus and is part of their character. Also, [H. 'Frances Williams'](#) is showing some colour bleeding towards the margins of the leaves, This exacerbates the tendency for this cultivar to scorch, but not so far this year.

### Isolate and observe

Of course you can elect to destroy your plant but then if it is a weather problem then you will have taken drastic action for no reason.

A while back an article on Hosta Virus X (HVX) caused a lot of anxiety as it seemed to suggest that any unusual leaf colouration could be a sign of the disease.

Our advice is always to act with caution but, as HVX is not readily transmitted beyond the division of the affected plant, it is perfectly safe to isolate and observe. Once again we suggest you look at the research done by the [American Hosta Society](#) for a comprehensive appraisal of HVX.

A final thought, if we always seek to destroy everything with a suspected virus then how will the plant develop any form of immunity?



### Gardeners' World Live

We were awarded a Platinum Medal for our display, which is the top award at Gardeners' World.

Please be aware the video is longer this time to enable Mel to dwell a while on the plants. We don't often have much time to fit in the video so when we do we like to give you more.

During the filming a fellow exhibitor mentions people removing labels and fudging around in displays prior to judging. This is a rather annoying thing we have to put up with at all shows and sometimes people think it is completely fine to move things around on a display, remove labels and sometimes also the plants.

We had a display plant stolen off the stand at Hampton Court a couple of years ago. This is not unusual, so perhaps if you are attending a show and see anyone messing around with a display please let the exhibitors know.



### Garden update

Thanks for some very overdue rainfall, the garden is responding well, but then so are the weeds. At least the watering requirement has eased for the time being whilst we focus on the rest of our show commitments and nursery open days. We are looking forward to starting on the second phase of the reservoir project and, although the weeds seem to be back with renewed vigour, we know the worse of the bramble has been cleared so there shouldn't be as much physical effort required to regain open ground. The next job is to remove some of the more mature growth inside the reservoir and start constructing the hard landscaping elements. We will probably begin work again in September.

All too soon the show season will be over and we will be able to return to this work. It has been gratifying to hear such positive comments from regular visitors about how much we have done so far. When you are working in it all the time you tend to only see the faults.

Speak soon

**Team Mickfield Hostas**

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### Hampton Court Palace Flower Show

How time flies, all of a sudden it is time for Hampton Court, the longest show we do.

This year we will be in the third section of the Floral Marquee, heading towards the rear on stand 228.

If you would like us to bring a pre-order for collection at Tatton Park Flower Show then please let us know by **Friday 12th July**.

