



Plant Heritage at Hampton Court

This month we devote the newsletter to all things 'National Collection' as we approach the Hampton Court Palace Flower Show, and the celebration of 35 years of Plant Heritage...

35 years of conservation

Plant Heritage began life as the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens, or NCCPG in 1978.

Changing the name to Plant Heritage was an inspired move as it better sums up the organisation's objective to conserve our plant heritage - **read more**. The best way to find out more about this valuable organisation is to visit the Plant Heritage Marquee at Hampton Court Palace Flower Show. Aside from the National Collections featured, there will be talks and demonstrations held in the 'Potting Shed' and the fabulous Seed Shop, which this year features celebrity seeds...

We will be exhibiting plants from our own National Collection. Fellow Plant heritage exhibitors will feature Hemerocallis (spider and unusual forms), Rubus spp., Dianthus (Malmaison), Iris (Sir Cedric Morris introductions), Myrtle, Jasminum, Lavandula and Iris (introductions by Arthur J Bliss). A stunning central garden has been designed by Selina Botham (see image left). Formal opening will be conducted by the Countess of Wessex - **read more**



Mickfield Hostas at Plant Heritage

This year we have decided to focus our display on key cultivars, which have had a major impact on the genus over the past 35 years.

The most obvious of these is *h.*

'June' - opposite. We recommend *h.*

'June' to anyone new to hostas. It is easy to grow and can cope with most soil and light conditions. *H.*

'June' is a sport of *h.* 'Halcyon', one of best known of the Tardiana Group of cultivars, developed by UK breeder, Eric Smith.

Our display will feature the Tardiana Group origins and development.



Tardiana Group origins

Part of the investigation into the Tardiana Group leads us to consider how *h.*

sieboldiana 'Elegans' developed from *h. sieboldiana*, a quite unremarkable

species. Experts seem to agree that *h. sieboldiana* 'Elegans' has *h.* 'Tokudama' in it's parentage. This would explain the blue colouring, and slow rate of growth of this cultivar.

The Tardiana Group of hostas were developed from the crossing of pollen from *h. sieboldiana* 'Elegans' with *h.* 'Tardiflora', which has slender, rich glossy green

Class of '78

It is hard to believe how much the genus hosta has expanded over recent years.

Looking back 35 years, to when the NCCPG was formed in 1978, we see some familiar hosta cultivars registered that year.

Here are those we hold in our collection:

H. 'Big Daddy'

H. 'Big Mama'

H. 'Blue Umbrellas'

H. 'Blue Whirls'

H. 'Celebration'

H. 'City Lights'

H. 'Floradora'

H. 'Frosted Jade'

H. 'Gala'

H. 'Gold Edger'

H. 'Green Sheen'

H. 'Halo'

H. 'Julia Hardy'

H. 'Little Aurora'

H. 'Love Pat'

H. 'Mentor Gold'

H. 'Midas Touch'

H. 'Reversed'

H. 'Sea Monster'

H. 'Serendipity'

H. 'Summer Snow'

H. 'Tot Tot'

H. 'Trail's End'

H. 'True Blue'

leaves. Subsequent cultivars all seem to share very neatly shaped leaves, which grow into neat mature mounds. More information about the Tardiana Group can be found in our **July 2007** newsletter. We are planning to feature as many Tardiana Group cultivars as we can within our Hampton Court Display, both as examples of mature plants, and as specimen leaves.

Tokudama links

The link between *h. sieboldiana* 'Elegans' and cultivars derived from *h.* 'Tokudama' will also be a feature of our exhibit because they are much more pest resistant, due to the texture and thickness of the leaves. It is interesting to see how the leaf characteristics have been enhanced by breeders over the past 35 years to encourage greater pest resistance, improved colour, and so on.



At the end of the 1970s Paul Aden introduced ***h.* 'Sum and Substance'** to the world. He registered this cultivar in 1980 as having unknown parentage, although it has many similarities to *h. montana*, with its sheen and prominent veins. We plan to include *h. montana* so you can see the likeness. However, the jury is still out on the exact parentage of *h.* 'Sum and Substance'. One thing is certain, it has strong characteristics. Many *h.* 'Sum and Substance' sports exhibit the same tell-tale leaf shape, sheen and prominent veins.

It is a fabulous plant and has been very popular ever since its introduction. Although it can be bonsai-ed to a certain degree by growing it in a container, it is best grown in the ground where it can spread to quite prodigious proportions. It makes a statement wherever it is grown and we will feature the cultivar in our display, alongside other examples of sports and crosses.

From the largest to one of the smallest

Perhaps one of the most significant developments over recent years has been the miniaturisation of hosta cultivars. Our display will feature ***h. venusta***, a miniature species, which has been used widely in breeding programmes. It has even been used with *h.* 'Sum and Substance', producing some interesting results. Perhaps one of the most successful sports of *h. venusta* is ***h.***

'Paradise Puppet' - opposite.

The bottom section of our display will feature many examples of miniature hostas to illustrate this development.

Finally, we will feature several plants which have a special status in our collection, such as ***h.* 'Paul's Glory'**. This cultivar has become a classic and deserves inclusion as the most expensive hosta we have ever added to our collection. It took several years before this cultivar became commercially available from tissue culture, but if ever there was a variety worth waiting for, this was it.

We hope to see you in the Plant Heritage Marquee this year.

Next month: Celebrating the completion of our Collection reorganisation...

***H.* 'Yellow Waves'**

***H.* 'Zounds'**

Some of these plants will feature in our display at Hampton Court. Many are as popular today as they were when first introduced.

Back at base

We have completed our reorganisation of the collection, and are putting the finishing touches to the shade areas over the next month.

By August we will have the collection fully operational again. This has been a mammoth task.

We will be improving signage, thanks to funding by the Brother UK bursary, which we received from Plant Heritage recently.

We are now re-potting our parent plants and selecting those we want for our exhibition garden. We have already begun landscaping and are looking forward to planting.

Shows update

June was a busy month with Gardeners' World at the NEC, and the Royal Norfolk Show.

We also attended several local Plant Fairs, which were very enjoyable, especially as the weather has improved greatly.

Don't forget we will be at **Tatton Park** at the end of the month, if there is anything you would like us to bring along as a pre-order, let us know by **Friday 19th July**.

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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