

July 2021



MICKFIELD HOSTAS

Finding inspiration from all types of garden

Last month we featured the lovely riverside garden of Lenore and Tom Tipping and this month we would like to share photos of Fuller's Mill Garden, in Suffolk.

Very few of us can boast acres of garden, or a stately home suitable for a Capability Brown landscape, but that doesn't mean we cannot have grand aspirations for our own spaces. Indeed I often find more inspiration in what people have done in very limited, or challenging, spaces.

For many years flower show gardens have given us just this kind of inspiration, where space limitations are a challenge that is embraced. Creating the impression of a long established garden in a matter of days is a true feat and although we can admire these show gardens, they would be beyond the pockets of many. Besides a garden needs to embody more than just a carefully curated planting plan and should evolve over time to engage all the senses to become truly inspirational.



Those of us bitten by the gardening bug find pleasure in developing and constantly evolving our green spaces but sometimes it can be a daunting task to get started. This is where it becomes invaluable to be able to visit established gardens to gather ideas and find out what you like, and what works well in similar environments. Last month I finally visited Fuller's Mill Garden in Suffolk (see photo above) as part of their guest nursery initiative.

Fuller's Mill Garden was designed and built by the late Bernard Tickner and subsequently donated to [Perennial](#), the charity that exists specifically to help people in horticulture. Perennial has been working tirelessly over many years to provide timely support to horticultural workers across the UK in a largely undervalued and under-appreciated industry but one that is so critical to the biodiversity of the UK.

Staged over seven acres, there is a wealth of different environments due to the garden straddling the river Lark

Exciting news

We have had an application for funding approved by Mid Suffolk District Council. The funding will cover 660 metres of fencing to finally separate the nursery from the surrounding countryside. We want to maintain the open space feel but need to keep out the ever growing population of deer, badgers and foxes so our new plantings have a hope of survival.

The funding also covers the purchase of trees to create a new arboretum in our north field. We ultimately plan to plant under the trees to create our own hosta heaven right here in Suffolk. You can be sure we will be experimenting with lots of different

and the proximity of water meadows. Bernard had an eye for different foliage forms and textures so there are quite a few hostas used to great effect and it was brilliant to see them looking fabulous and free of pest damage. It just goes to show how you can garden with nature rather than feeling the need to have a fight with it when things don't work out. Indeed a successful garden becomes more so when it generates a sense of wellbeing. In order to reach the garden you have to turn off the village road and pass through a wooded area. This fairly long driveway provides the perfect transition from the mechanics of driving to the contemplation of a garden.



Here is another view captured at Fuller's Mill

I spent a while enjoying the forms and planting in this particular area. Most of the colour is provided by the beautiful mix of foliage with a few flowery accents. If you carefully select a succession of flowering highlights then you can create a very long lasting season. Nothing jars the senses but there is excitement and impact just the same - love it!



More hosta with Astrantia and ferns. What a lovely combination of gentle colours and foliage forms.

combinations of planting and using ideas from our travels, as well as previous experiments in flower show exhibits with the aim of providing inspiration to visitors as the projects develop.

Ferns and hostas are a classic combination:



In the photo above [H. 'June'](#) adds a full stop to a broad sweep of

[H. 'Sum and Substance'](#)

The former sits in shade most of the day hence the intense blue tones, while the latter sits mostly in sun so has turned a rich limey gold.

Complementary plantings

My visit to Fuller's Mill highlighted something we had already discovered, that planting Astrantia among hostas (see photo on left) helps mitigate snail damage. Apparently snails are not keen on this plant so I am sure the lovely mature clumps of Astrantia are

Visiting the garden as a guest nursery is a great way for us to publicise our business while helping such a worthy charity. It was a very relaxing afternoon meeting people and chatting with Annie Dellbridge, Head Gardener and coordinator of Fuller's Mill devotees and volunteers.

Some of our hostas will be used in a new planting area so it will be exciting to return and watch their development.

What Bernard decided to plant, and where, illustrates his love of form and foliage and Annie's team are doing a great job continuing his legacy. I heartily recommend a visit for heaps of inspiration - I took way more photos than I could hope to include in a newsletter (I have used as many as would fit) so why not see it all for yourself in the knowledge you are also supporting a great charity.

As you may have guessed, I found Fuller's Mill a complete joy to visit and on a level I could easily engage with. So while we are on that subject, how about visiting some gardens locally to you, which are open through the National Garden Scheme?

The National Garden Scheme (NGS)

The [NGS](#) raises money for nursing and health charities through open days held at thousands of individual gardens throughout the UK.

It is such a brilliant idea to allow people access to private gardens where they can relax, enjoy tea and cake whilst soaking up the atmosphere, sights and sounds. What better way to gather inspiration and support the charities the NGS supports. Do take a look at the website if you are unfamiliar with the organisation and I am sure you will be hooked by the idea of over 3,500 different gardens awaiting your visit. You could also get involved by opening your own garden for the scheme - [find out more here](#).

Happy gardening

Team Mickfield Hostas

doing their bit to help.

On the face of it, the gardens at Fuller's Mill are just the perfect environment for slugs and snails with wonderfully shady dells and the proximity of damp watermeadows. Obviously the wildlife is doing its bit with the population so a balance has been achieved. It is so encouraging to see. I know I have been bitterly disappointed at high-profile gardens, such as Wisley, how much damage is visible in their hosta plantings. It certainly does little to encourage people to try hostas for themselves.

It set my mind thinking about the potential merits of planting from the onion family, given the fact that snails also hate the smell of garlic. I plan to try wild garlic and alliums in among my garden plantings in future, so I'll let you know how that goes.



Alliums planted among the hostas