



Lutescence and albescence in hostas

This month we focus on varieties, which exhibit their best colouring later in the season and are sometimes overlooked when plant purchases are being considered in the spring...

Seasonal variation

This is an important consideration when planning a garden as many plants have specific times of the year when they are at their best.

This is also the case with some hostas and seasonal variation was the subject of one of our first newsletters back in **December 2007**. One of the most common forms of seasonal variation is viridescence, where all or part of the leaf turns green during the season. We covered this subject in our **July 2009** newsletter but thought the time was right to highlight some of our favourite varieties which develop their best colouring later in the season.

Lutescent varieties

Lutescent varieties become lighter and brighter during the season.

Most varieties which exhibit lutescence over the whole leaf are golds. Among our favourites in this category are: **h. 'Paradise Standard'**, (top right) which

emerges bright green with creamy yellow margins. By summer the leaves become much more gold and the margins much whiter.

H. 'Tickle Me Pink' has muted mid green leaves in spring (bottom right), which become gold before summer. It has rich red petioles, like its parent **h. 'One Man's Treasure'**. The flower scapes and flowers are reddish-purple and are a striking contrast to the gold leaves. It makes an excellent container plant and a good planting companion for the parent.

Varieties which exhibit lutescence in the centre of the leaf are among the most stunning varieties but can also be problematic to grow whilst retaining this characteristic.

An excellent example of this is **h. 'Beckoning'**, which emerges with plain blue leaves and the faintest hint of variegation. As the season progresses the leaf centre turns gold. Some varieties only start to show their full beauty as they mature and one such favourite is **h. 'Liberty'**. Every year this plant seems to get better and better, and the margin colour more stunning. This variety has been described as having albescent margins but our experience differs. Our parent plant is grown in deep shade, which may explain the richness of colour.



Mothering Sunday

Why not treat your mum to some plants this month?



If you are unsure what she might like, vouchers could be a good idea - **find out more**

We begin dispatching plants at the end of March (weather permitting).

Our 2012 availability list is now online.

This year we are nudging 1,000 different species and cultivars for sale - this is the widest range we have ever had on offer.

Although this is great news for those of you trying to source specific plants you have already identified, it does make choosing from scratch problematic. We have wrestled with this issue for years. In particular how can we create a user-friendly tool to narrow down the

Albescent varieties

Albescent varieties become whiter during the season. Albescent margins are the most common form of this seasonal variation. There are a lot of varieties with margins that are darker when they emerge and become whiter/white during the season. Among them are many fragrant varieties. When the whole leaf is described as albescent, this tends to look as if the plant has been bleached and the colours can look quite insipid. These plants would still grace a shady spot, where the colours would not bleach out so readily. The most unusual of the albescent varieties are those where the leaf centres become lighter.



One of our favourite plants exhibiting this characteristic is ***h.* 'Paradise Joyce'** - opposite. A sport of ***h.* 'June'**, this cultivar has wonderfully subtle tones of green and blue through most of the season. As autumn nears the leaf centres turn whiter and the variegation is fabulous. It looks like a smaller version of ***h.* 'Beckoning'** where the leaf centre becomes brighter rather than whiter.

Among the more popular cultivars with albescent leaf centres are: ***h.* 'High Society'**, ***h.* 'Remember Me'**, and ***h.* 'Orange Marmalade'** (see opposite). We generally exhibit these cultivars at the early spring shows, when they are at their most vibrant. *H.* 'High Society' and *h.* 'Remember Me' do maintain their colouring well into the season if grown in shade, but they can be slow to grow.



This is because they are small cultivars with less green leaf area, which is required to produce the nourishment needed to feed the roots. *H.* 'Orange Marmalade' is a more reliable cultivar, coming from ***h.* 'Paul's Glory'**, and can be an excellent substitute if space is an issue. It makes an exceptional container plant due to its vibrant colouring.

A full list of the main seasonal variations, and the varieties which have these characteristics can be found [here](#).

Next month: We feature two favourite cultivars with fabulous spring colour...

The advice and opinions contained within this monthly newsletter have been formed over more than 35 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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search? We have deliberately kept our website free of complex browsing devices and techniques to ensure our website is accessible across the multitude of modern browsing platforms, and over the kind of limited bandwidths many of us have to live with.

Visitors to our website can already browse our National Collection against characteristics such as plant size, foliage, flower and stem colour, seasonal variation, etc. However, not all the varieties in our collection are for sale yet.

New search facility

We now have a new page which lists 47 different combinations of leaf colour. By clicking on the desired leaf colouring in the list, you will see all the varieties we have available for sale categorised by their flower colour, fragrance and plant mound size. These are the most commonly stated preferences when customers call us for help in choosing.

We have underlined those varieties with limited availability and we have kept to a simple 5-colour key for the flowers. Fragrant varieties are asterisked. Finally, you can return to the top of the page to select another leaf combination and repeat your search, by clicking on the 'Back to top' links.

We would appreciate your **feedback on this feature**.