

This month...

A personal review of the Harrogate Spring Flower Show, advice on splitting your hostas and a footnote explaining why some varieties are more expensive than others.

In the side column we look forward to the Malvern Spring Show and highlight some interesting varieties that we will be featuring in our displays and among our sales plants - hope to see you there.

Harrogate Spring Flower Show

Harrogate Spring Flower Show was a delightful start to the season for Mickfield Hostas and many other exhibitors at the Show. The weather was superb and the Show organisers were pleased to report their highest gate numbers ever.



We had our best ever Harrogate Spring Show and were really pleased to catch up with many of our regular customers as well as introducing ourselves to many new customers. It often became quite raucous around the selling tables with lots of playful banter and some excellent conversations about hostas too!

Although the weather was good, it was particularly dry and the levels of dust in the hall resulted in the displays looking a little tired by the end of the Show, especially in the Society Marquee. This year we put on a leaf display for the British Hosta and Hemerocallis Society stand for the first time. Given the time of year it was a challenge to find leaves of sufficient maturity to exhibit without drooping but we managed to stage a reasonable attempt that we hope to build on in future shows.

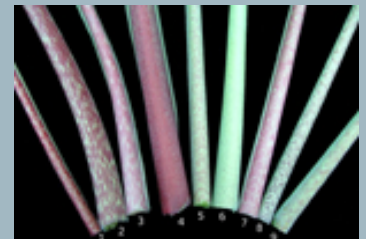


Harrogate Show is always a pleasure to do but it is fraught with difficulties due to the fact that it is the first show of the hosta season. As our collection plants grow in a shade house they need bringing on (popped into a slightly warmer environment) so that they are sufficiently grown to exhibit. Once they have reached a certain stage they then need to be bought out into the open gradually so that they become acclimatised to the fact that the weather is still cool. This year spring sprung early and the weather was much warmer than usual so this greatly affected our schedule with the result that some of the plants were a little too far forward. Despite all this our plants held up well throughout the Show and are now recovering in tunnel 3 so they can perhaps appear later in the season. The best surprise was how well the dwarf and small varieties fared in the troughs - sufficiently well to travel with us to Malvern next week!

Coming up...

We are currently preparing for the **The RHS Malvern Spring Gardening Show 10-13 May**

At Malvern we plan to feature a number of varieties that have interesting stems or petioles:



(click for a larger image and follow the links below for more information)

1. [Fire Island](#)
2. [One Man's Treasure](#)
3. [Harry van de Laar](#)
4. [Regal Rhubarb](#)
5. [Lacy Belle](#)
6. [First Frost](#)
7. [Torchlight](#)
8. [Deane's Dream](#)
9. [Theo's Blue](#)

The following images of these varieties show how the colour graduates at the front and back of the leaves (click on images to enlarge):

Splitting your hostas

Hostas have been called the 'friendship plant' in America as enthusiasts love to collect and share their plants with friends. As the best time to split hostas is in the spring, we thought we would dispense some advice on the subject this month.

Why spring?

Splitting your hosta in the spring allows a whole growing season for the plant to settle and flourish.

The splitting process is easy, simply dig up your hosta and take a knife to the root ball (a spade is more practical for splitting larger, more established plants). Don't worry if it appears quite brutal, hostas are very forgiving plants especially if you restrict how many divisions you make each time. Indeed, splitting very established hostas is beneficial to the plants and can prevent them from becoming stressed. Signs of stress to look for are typically:

- if the leaves have developed brown edges (though this can also indicate wind burn or sun scorching)
- if there is a proliferation of small leaves in the centre of the plant mound - this indicates that the plant is growing too densely in the centre
- if flowering is occurring before the leaves have emerged (if this happens, remove the flower head above the first pair of leaves)

Premature splitting can be stressful...

Even if you are really tempted, don't split your purchased hosta too soon - if you split it when you plant it you are subjecting the plant to unnecessary stress. We strongly recommend that you give your plants a season to grow within the environment of your garden before subjecting them to splitting.

A common mistake made by gardeners unfamiliar with hostas is to treat them with too much care. They look exotic and quite different from other plants typically grown in UK gardens but that doesn't mean they require special attention beyond the prevention of damage by pests and that is something all plants suffer from. Above all enjoy your hostas as they are a wonderful addition to any garden.

psst...

Why are some hostas more expensive than others?

Essentially the price is determined by how new/available a variety is.

Hostas that have only just become commercially available are often in short supply and so the usual 'supply and demand' equations determine price.

Some varieties cannot be produced in sufficient number to satisfy demand and so the price could remain high for several years.

The majority of hostas available to the market are propagated by tissue culture.

Occasionally this results in the production of varieties that do not exhibit their registered characteristics and so cannot be sold. Praying Hands and Olympic Sunrise are two recent varieties to suffer from this and so supplies are very limited.

This is the main reason we prefer to propagate through root division to ensure the retention of correct plant characteristics.

Next month: Reflections on the Malvern Spring and Gardening Scotland Shows



On our return from Malvern we will begin preparations for **Gardening Scotland 1-3 June**

We will leave the nursery in good time to travel to Edinburgh and set up the exhibits so if you would like us to bring plant orders up to the Show then you will need to let us know before **Wednesday 23rd May**
[How to order...](#)

The advice and opinions contained within this monthly newsletter have been formed over more than 30 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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