



H. 'Northern Halo'

This month we feature another of our favourite plants.

H. 'Northern Halo', has been recorded in several different forms since being introduced in 1985...

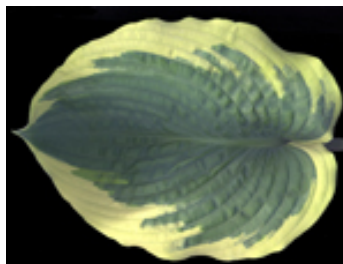
The 'Northern' series

H. 'Northern Halo' is one of a series of cultivars developed by Walters Gardens, which is in the state of Michigan - click on the map to find out about the growing environment of the original clump.

The Northern series includes *h.* 'Northern Exposure', which is very similar to *h.* 'Northern Halo' but benefits from having consistently wide margins. We tend to recommend *h.* 'Northern Exposure' to customers

looking for reliable reproduction of the wide margin characteristic, to avoid any potential disappointment. Having said that, in our experience, once *h.* 'Northern Halo' is mature, it is very stable.

Spot the difference:



H. 'Northern Halo'



H. 'Northern Exposure'



H. 'Northern Halo' is a sport of *h. sieboldiana* 'Elegans', which is obvious in the characteristics of the leaf shape and the growth habit of the cultivar. The leaves are elegantly shaped, wonderfully corrugated and the wide margins are striking.

Nomenclature note

The RHS refer to the cultivar as *h. sieboldiana* 'Northern Halo', which alludes to its parentage.

However, this cultivar is not a direct sport of *h. sieboldiana* so we prefer to use its registered name, to avoid any confusion.

We have visited this issue in previous newsletters and our Plant Heritage display at Hampton Court in 2010 displayed both *h. sieboldiana*, the original species from Japan, and *h. sieboldiana* 'Elegans', the western form of the species.

What's happening?

It all started out so well, but here we are in another very challenging spring. As if the lack of rainfall wasn't enough in our area, the weather has decided we should have the balance due in a single month! The date of the introduction of a hosepipe ban in our area coincided with the start of the rain and it hasn't stopped for very long since.

In drought hit areas the rainfall is running off hard earth without really soaking in. In wet areas of the country it is just adding to the misery of already waterlogged conditions.

Just as we were becoming accustomed to the warm March sunshine, and the perennials were emerging from dormancy, the cold arrived.

If your plants are looking sorry for themselves, remove the damaged leaves carefully. There is plenty of time for the plant to produce fresh growth and catch up.

We hope the season may last a little longer this year since the weather has effectively held back plant growth this spring.

There are several forms of *h.* 'Northern Halo', which have been sold under this name since introduction in the 1980s - The American Hosta Guide has previously listed up to eight different 'forms'. The difference between being the width and nature of the leaf margins. We consider the 'Walters' form to be the true variant as this was the original registration form of the cultivar. We are aware of narrower-margined forms, and do have the 'puckered' form in our collection (and for sale). This is an interesting version of the cultivar with narrow margins, which act as a drawstring, creating a cupped leaf. Sometimes removing the first flush of leaves can provoke the plant into producing flatter leaves as the season progresses. It is an unusual plant, with collector appeal.

Second generation

Perhaps the most popular sport of *h.* 'Northern Halo' is *h.* 'American Halo', see below:



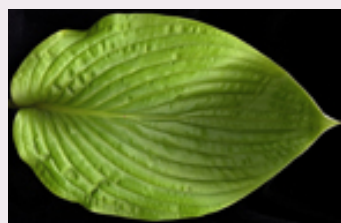
Although this cultivar is supposed to grow to a similar size to its parent, we have found it slow to achieve these dimensions. We also find the leaf colour to be more subtle than the parent. It might be a cultivar which exhibits truer characteristics when grown in the ground. We are looking forward to experimenting with the growing conditions to see if there is a discernable difference.

H. 'Moonlight Sonata' and *h.* 'Warwick Essence' are two cultivars bred from *h.* 'Northern Halo'. Both have been crossed with fragrant varieties (*h.* 'Invincible' and *h.* *plantaginea* respectively) to produce fragrant flowers. We have both these varieties in our collection and for sale.

We also have two other crosses in our collection: *h.* 'Kabuki' and *h.* 'Happy Camper'. Both are variegated cultivars exhibiting some of the texture and colour of *h.* 'Northern Halo'. They also share characteristics of *h.* 'Neat Splash'.



H. 'Moonlight Sonata'



H. 'Warwick Essence'



H. 'Kabuki'



H. 'Happy Camper'

Next month: We feature another favourite cultivar, *h.* 'Fragrant Bouquet'...

Harrogate Spring Flower Show

A big thank you to all the visitors to the Harrogate Spring Flower Show at the end of April. Despite the horrendous weather, you turned out and put a brave face on things - we appreciate this because it makes all our efforts worthwhile.

It was decided cold in our tent but not much warmer in the Floral Halls... click on the images below to see the display:



We missed a Premier Gold award by one mark. The cold weather meant that some of the plants were not fully unfurled.



Feedback from our visitors suggest they were pleased to see plants in their natural, unfurled state, and they did look lovely.

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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