

The 'Sea' series of cultivars

This month we feature some beautiful hostas from Mildred Seaver, who introduced more than 90 notable cultivars to the genus during her years of hybridising...

Mildred Seaver

Researching this series of the genus involved reading a number of obituaries for their breeder, Mildred Seaver. Once again, it is sad to note the passing of another true enthusiast, but she did live a long life, dying in 2011 at the age of 98.

Mildred lived in Needham Heights, a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts, on the eastern seaboard of North America - click on the map opposite to view details. Interestingly, the town of Needham was named in 1690 after Needham Market, which is only eight miles from our own nursery in Suffolk.



Once again, the climate compares favourably with that of the UK and, according to her obituary in the Boston Globe, "the shade, extra subsurface water, and many feet of compost" made her garden "the ideal horticultural environment for growing hostas."

By all accounts, it seems Mildred was drawn to the genus, and was less concerned with keeping an accurate record of the results of her hybridising efforts, than ensuring there was something special about the cultivars she produced. Her gardening style was not slavish, and apparently she fed her garden snails lettuce leaves, which she would leave around the garden, to tempt them away from her hostas. Much less smelly and messy than garlic washes, and we believe it works more effectively too.



H. 'Queen of the Seas'

Of Mildred's introductions 47 had the prefix 'Sea', an abbreviation of Seaver, in their names. The rest were named for other reasons, but are equally as notable.

Mildred's introductions all have something about them that sets them apart. We particularly like the enhancements to texture and leaf shape she achieved, especially in varieties such as *H. 'Deep Blue Sea'*, *H. 'Queen of the Seas'* and *H. 'Sea Gulf Stream'*, which we use regularly in our show displays.

Mildred enjoyed all aspects of the genus and made a valuable contribution to it over

Malvern Spring Gardening Festival

A new name and a fresh layout for the show will be awaiting visitors this year. We will be welcoming people to our outside stand alongside the right-hand entrance to the Floral Marquee.

If you would like us to bring anything specific to the show, let us know by **Friday 2nd May**.

H. 'Mildred Seaver'



This handsome cultivar was bred by Kevin Vaughn, friend and fellow hosta breeder of Mildred Seaver. Registered in 1981, we obtained our collection plant from Sandra Bond back in the mid 1980s. The plant is a cross from *H. 'Breeder's Choice'* and *H. 'Frances Williams'*. Although it is an older variety, it retains popularity due to the clarity of colour and outstanding substance, seldom scorching or melting out in stronger light. Naming this cultivar after Mildred was a fitting acknowledgement of their

the years, working in collaboration with other key breeders and members of the American Hosta Society. As a result of her desire to breed good quality cultivars, her introductions are distinctive, see the **American Hosta Society website** for a full list. We hold around a third of these cultivars in our National Collection, which we list below - click on the names to find out more:



H. 'Allan P McConnell'
H. 'Blue Plate Special'
H. 'Bold and Brassy'
H. 'Christmas Gold'



H. 'Komodo Dragon'



H. 'Sea Gulf' Stream
H. 'Sea Hero'



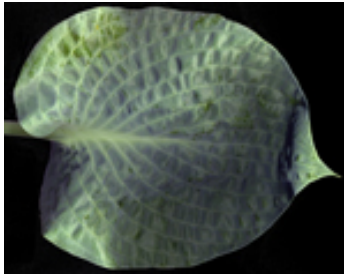
H. 'Christmas Tree'



H. 'Lucy Vitols'



H. 'Sea Lotus Leaf'
H. 'Sea Mist'
H. 'Sea Monster'
H. 'Sea Nymph'
H. 'Sea Slate II'



H. Deep Blue Sea'
H. 'Diane Gray Dalton'



H. 'Queen of the Seas'



H. 'Sea Thunder'
H. 'Sea Yellow Sunrise'



H. 'Don Stevens'
H. 'El Dorado'
H. 'High Noon'



H. 'Red Salamander'
H. 'Richmond'
H. 'Sea Beacon'
H. 'Sea Current'
H. 'Sea Dream'
H. 'Sea Fire'



H. 'Spilt Milk'

It was interesting to discover that Mildred's love of the genus originated when she saw a hosta in the garden of her friend Leola Fraim. Hosta cultivars were very expensive at that time, so she decided to try growing some from seed. Mildred's interest in the genus was duly piqued when she discovered the need to actively hybridise hostas in order to create something new, rather than being perturbed by the lack of interesting results from propagating seeds.

In 2006 Mildred received the Eunice Fisher Distinguished Hybridizer Merit Award from the American Hosta Society, a fine accolade for a true enthusiast.

Next month: [Spring show reviews...](#)

friendship and helps ensure her role in growing the genus is remembered.

Offspring of Mildred Seaver

Mildred considered her two children to be her finest hybrids, but her namesake plant has also produced three lovely cultivars:



H. 'Brother Stefan'

This fantastic cultivar is so heavily rugose, with an intensity of colour, which develops with maturity.



H. 'Goldbrook Gratis'

This sport of *H. 'Mildred Seaver'* becomes more apparently different as it matures.



H. 'Hoosier Dome'

We love the elegance of this cultivar, which has many similarities to *H. 'Niagara Falls'*, which is in its parentage.

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**.