



MICKFIELD HOSTAS



A reservoir of dreams?

As promised last month, we have begun work to transform our reservoir into a *Hosta* garden.

A short history

The reservoir was dug at the nursery in the early 1980s to supply irrigation for our market garden enterprise, watering crops such as strawberries, mange tout, courgettes and more exotic vegetables for the local and London markets.

When Robin and Yvonne decided to make more of their burgeoning *Hosta* collection, in the early 1990s, they established a tunnel watering system pumped from the reservoir. This system successfully flooded the benches in a series of damned bays until recently, when gravity and time have taken their toll on the benches and flooding no longer works as efficiently as it once did. This year Roy has spent the majority of his nursery time hand watering and so we are devising a new watering system, which will render the reservoir redundant for that purpose.

A largely undisturbed wildlife haven

During almost 40 years of existence, the reservoir has been home to a wide variety of wildlife and this is something we hope to encourage further through the development of the garden.

The reservoir used to be home to an inherited host of Koi carp, which successfully grew and bred for many years until either otters or mink (we are unsure which) devastated the population a few years ago. Herons used to visit regularly but, as they were only able to stand on the pontoon to fish, our fish were wise to this. They couldn't escape water borne predators though. There are some prices to pay for the naturalisation of a species but it was

Nursery developments

The photo at the head of the newsletter is a view of the front field from above, taken from Mel's house. Although this is only a letterbox image it does show parts of the beds, which are getting nicely established.

Before and the promise of after!

The following photos show how overgrown the reservoir has become but also, when you peer through the tangle of bramble and willow, the promise of what lies behind:



The reservoir is almost empty of water, there is a slick of algae covering the last sludgy

obvious we couldn't re-stock the reservoir as we were unable to protect the fish adequately.

Over recent years the reservoir has become choked with willow and bramble to such an extent that the first task is to clear the sides so we can see where best to create access points, and devise a planting plan. This is proving extremely hard, but deeply satisfying, work. This clearance work will highlight the hard landscaping required and to a large extent dictate the planting scheme to enable us to work with existing features.

We have taken lots of photos and will pop these into a new area of the website for sharing next month.

The south field

In the south field Mel has completed two more planted beds and largely completed the rubber rockery. Once the chippings bin has been moved she plans to create a secluded picnic area in the lea of the collection tunnels. It should be a lovely sun trap and out of the prevailing wind whilst we decide what we want to do to screen the nursery from the adjacent agricultural land. At the moment the wind whips across the fields and we need to give ourselves some protection without completely hiding the wide-ranging views to the west.

2019 Shows update

No sooner do we finish one season and another coming knocking... Hard on the heels of our acceptance into BBC Gardeners' World, we are delighted to have been successful with all our RHS flower show applications. That means our 2019 show calendar is starting to look busy - [check it out here](#).

We have also provisionally booked many of our local plant fairs, which are listed on the calendar too. We will hear from Harrogate in December and will update the calendar when we know the outcome.

We apologise for the lack of 'Hosta talk' this month but hope you have enjoyed hearing about some of our plans to make the nursery a more exciting place to visit over the coming years. Next month we will share photos of the work via the website and return to our customary 'out of season' look at the world of *Hosta*.

Team Mickfield Hostas

remnants. We plan to dig a channel through this, which will be allowed to flood and dry out as the weather dictates because it is a great wildlife resource.



We are also planning to create a raised walkway alongside, which will allow access whatever the conditions, and prevent too much disturbance of the channel.



This is where the gang plank goes down to the pump pontoon. You can see the handrail but little else as the overgrown foliage has restricted access. The pontoon now sits on the floor of the reservoir and has become its own little island habitat. We will remove this but could perhaps re-create it, with more natural foundations, elsewhere in the reservoir.