



This month we reflect on the 2008 hosta season and share our highlights.

It has been a tough trading year right across all retail sectors and horticulture has not escaped the effects of the credit crunch either. One thing we have noticed is the change in the profile of visitors coming to the major RHS shows and we return to this in the body of the newsletter...

Our 2008 show season

We started off our season with the **Harrogate Spring Show**.

It was lovely to catch up with so many customers and the hostas were looking lovely, if a little backward after the stop-start spring we experienced this year. We were thrilled to receive a gold award for our display given the fact that our plants were a little on the small side. Definitely the plant of the year was *h.* 'Fire Island', seen here in our Harrogate Spring display. The leaves emerge fresh yellow and turn lime green during the season on bright red spotted petioles.



H. 'Fire Island'

Malvern Spring Show was where we first noticed a change in the profile of visitors coming to the shows this year. For the first time in a while it seemed that the gardeners were not out in force. The weather was lovely at Malvern, a distinct improvement to the wash-out of the previous year, so we deduced that the gardeners must have been making the most of the fine weather at home. Both in the floral marquee and on the outside stand we watched a steady stream of visitors wander past eating ice cream with a detached air that suggested they didn't really know why they were there!



H. 'Magic Fire'

Taking the strain

As we have mentioned in previous newsletters, the show circuit is a demanding place to be and it takes a lot of effort to display our plants looking in tip top condition, when they have roughed a long trip in a lorry, squeezed onto dutch trolleys. Sometimes we fare little better and the knees really feel it at times:



Fortunately, the joints held out and we made it through another satisfying show season.

Gardening Scotland

This year we made the difficult decision to drop Gardening Scotland from our calendar. We have so many excellent customers in the north and we didn't want to let them down. However, the costs and logistics of doing the show have increased over the years, as our revenue from the show has steadily decreased, so it was a

On a positive note, we received a Silver-Gilt for our display, which included h. 'Magic Fire'.

Strangely enough, our best show this year was **Gardener's World at the NEC**. Our plant mall display came third in the competition for best plant mall spot, which was very gratifying as the light levels in the halls are not the best for showing plants. We still think the NEC is an odd choice of venue for a flower show but it is so easily accessible from all over the UK. The decision to combine shows over the past two years has proved good for us in that it has increased our reach to non-gardeners. We have picked up lots of new customers at this show and we hope other nurseries have also benefitted in the same way.

At the **Hampton Court Flower Show** this year we were right in the middle of the show ground instead of in area 'D' by the Stud Gate entrance. This year we had our best ever Gala Night in the new location and our customers found us without too much searching. Although plant plots are not judged for awards, they are judged for their displays and whether those displays are kept pristine throughout the show. This is no mean feat when you consider how long the show is and how difficult the weather can be, so we were really pleased to be judged as excellent for the whole show.

Hard on the heels of Hampton Court was the **Tatton Park Flower Show**. This year the organisers did a fantastic job in keeping the show ground nice in challenging conditions. This is perhaps the toughest show to do from an exhibitors perspective as we cannot store our sales plants anywhere near our marquee stands. We did a circular display this year, which was very well received by our customers and we got a Silver award from the RHS.

Both Hampton Court and Tatton Park Flower shows suffered the same malaise as Malvern Spring. Aside from the members days the visitors seemed mostly disinterested in plants.



Considering the wealth of unusual plants that are available for sale it is a shame that visitors to the show miss out on the opportunity to buy plants they would never find at a typical garden centre.

Our final show of the year was the **Harrogate Autumn Show** and as usual, it was a treat to do. We rounded off the year with our very first Premier Award for our display.

And, finally... we want to thank all of you who came to see us this year, either at a show or at the nursery.

You are the life-blood of our business and collection and we hope to see you again next year. Don't forget we will be 'virtually' with you throughout the winter via our website, so why not stay in touch with developments this way.

Next month: The 'X' factor - what is virus X and how does it affect hostas...

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](#).

[Subscribe >](#) | [Unsubscribe >](#) | [Archive >](#)

business decision we had to take. Instead we supported a local NCCPG Plant Sale at Helmingham Hall in Suffolk and the annual Continental Market at Bury St. Edmunds.

A word on bunting

Visitors to the shows this year will have seen our wonderful bunting:



We wanted to take this opportunity to thank Karen and Sue for finding this fabulous fabric and making the bunting for us - it was a lovely surprise and we are confident you will agree it makes an excellent edging for our tables:

