October 2022



How to identify hostas Part 2

This month we focus on the Tardiana Group and its offspring.

The 'Tardiana Group' of hostas was created by the UK breeder Eric Smith and is one of the most commercially successful group of hostas to be produced so far.

The image below is of \underline{H} . 'Devon Green', which is a sport of \underline{H} . 'Halcyon' and nicely illustrates the perfection of leaf shape found in the Tardiana Group and its offspring.



Identifying Tardiana types

From the original Tardiana Group a whole swathe of cultivars has been introduced, coming from individual breeders and from the original collaboration between Eric Smith and a selection of breeders, both in the UK and elsewhere.

Leaf characteristics of the Tardiana Group

The differences between the Tardiana Group cultivars can be quite subtle unless you are looking at them alongside each other. However:

- they are among the best blues available
- they keep their bloom well into the season when others may fade
- the leaves range from flat to moderately corrugated
- the leaves have excellent substance (thickness). This characteristic helps with seasonal longevity, colour fastness and pest resistance.

Many modern cultivars have been bred with extra sets of chromosomes to enhance some of these characteristics, which has led some to declare them slug resistant. Whether they are indeed

The Tardiana Group

UK breeder Eric Smith found a late flower on his *H.* sieboldiana 'Elegans' (below).





He decided to use the pollen with that from *H*. 'Tardiflora' (above),

snail resistant too is another question, but it does appear the bloom on the leaf may be distasteful to them.

Leaf characteristics of the Tardiana Group offspring

Offspring of the Tardiana Group offspring range widely in colour and variegation, some of which change during the season. Some offspring show distinct characteristics of either H. 'Tardiflora' or H. 'Elegans'. Therefore, trying to identify generational offspring of the Tardiana Group relies much more on leaf colour.

Plant shape and habit

Tardiana Group cultivars, and their offspring are generally neat in habit, although they can exhibit erratic growth within the plant mound if their roots are becoming restricted and stop-start springs can make them a little less tidy as they emerge. They generally exhibit an open habit with the leaves layering and pointing downwards. Some will stand more erect towards the centre of the plant mounds when mature.

Plant size

One of the reasons why these cultivars are so popular in that they are quite predictable in growth, usually under 18" in height and 40" diameter - or medium in our classification system. This makes them ideal for smaller gardens and mixed border situations. They are also excellent for growing in containers, not requiring regular division to maintain size, providing they are not in too small a container of course.



Flowers

The image above is of the flowers of H. 'Rhein' a Tardiana type from Heinz Klose of Germany.

Flowers of the Tardiana group and its offspring:

are white through to deep lavender. It can help guite a bit to know the flower colour as it could help determine between the cultivars with more certainty

which as the name suggests, is a naturally late flowering cultivar.

Two such very different parents yielded a number of bluegreen seedlings of which Eric kept four as the first generation. He then used these four seedlings to produce a second generation and ultimately a third generation, which consisted of a single seedling. Eric shared the seedlings with other breeders and together they worked to agree which cultivars should be named and registered. I have reproduced the Tardiana

Group list below in alphabetical order, as it is interesting to see the range of cultivars this cross produced:

First generation: TF1:

H. 'Dorset Charm

H. 'Dorset Flair'

H. 'Halcyon'

H. 'Happiness'

Second generation: TF2:

H. 'Blue Belle'

H. 'Blue Danube'

H. 'Blue Diamond'

H. 'Blue Dimples'

H. 'Blue Moon'

H. 'Blue Skies'

H. 'Blue Wedgwood'

H. 'Brother Ronald'

H. 'Camelot'

H. 'Curlew'

H. 'Dorset Blue'

H. 'Eric Smith'

H. 'Grey Goose'

H. 'Hadspen Blue'

H. 'Hadspen Hawk'

H. 'Hadspen Heron'

H. 'Hadspen Pink'

H. 'Harmony'

H. 'Kingfisher'

H. 'Osprey'

H. 'Purbeck Ridge'

H. 'Sherborne Profusion' H. 'Sherborne Songbird'

H. 'Sherborne Swallow'

- often have stripy petals and generously large flowers see photo above
- tend to flower later in the season, from July onwards.

Hosta 'Halcyon'

The most commercially popular among the Tardiana Group has been *H*. 'Halycon' (pictured on the left) with a whole range of offspring, which have become 'must haves' for any garden over the years. *Hosta* 'Halcyon, and its offspring exhibit uniformly neat leaves, which are usually flat. They are among the longest lasting of hostas, emerging early in spring and lasting well into the autumn.

Hosta Halcyon is to date responsible for 90 named sports and crosses. Many of those cultivars have in turn produced more, including perhaps the most famous, H. 'June', which has 36 named sports and crosses to date. One of which is the delightful H. 'June Fever', which exhibits more H. 'Tardiflora' characteristics than its parent. It remains a delicious shade of lime green with a neat dark green margin throughout the year.



Tardiana types

Over and above the Tardiana Group and its offspring are yet more cultivars which have distinctly similar characteristics. They tend to be referred to as Tardiana types as a result and they are too numerous to mention. However, once you become accustomed to the generic look and feel of this branch of the genus you will begin to notice how often breeders have used these beautiful characteristics to advance their own programmes.

One cultivar I particularly like is <u>H. 'Waukon Thin Ice'</u>. Although I am not usually a fan of variegated cultivars, I like the subtlety of this one. It has obvious origins in the Tardiana Group with the neat shape of leaf and vibrancy of blue. This one is a sport of <u>H.</u>

H. 'Sherborne Swan'
H. 'Sherborne Swift'
H. 'Wagtail'

Third generation: TF3:
H. 'Blue Blush'

I have created a page on our website, which lists the <u>Tardiana</u> Group in numbered order.

Hosta 'Halcyon'





Hosta 'June'

This is a great cultivar for any garden and one we recommend to anyone new to hostas. Its colour varies according to its environment with more blue tones in deeper shade to a golden yellow centre in the sun.

The Tardiana Group in our National Collection

We hold examples of all the Tardiana Group with the exception of *H*. 'Hadspen Pink, *H*. 'Kite' and *H*. 'Goldilocks', the last two have subsequently been declared as non-existent, so we omitted them from the listing above.

We also hold a good number of their offspring, and subsequent <u>'Topaz'</u>, which is a cross of *H.* 'Neat Splash' and <u>H.</u> 'Dorset Blue', the latter being a second generation Tardiana Group cultivar.



I couldn't hope to list every cultivar to be related to the original Tardiana Group, let alone feature images, in a single newsletter but I have given you a jumping off point to investigate further. I have listed all the Tardiana Group and their immediate offspring on our website, and I will continue to add further generations of cultivars from those offspring over the coming months. It is really interesting to see how the original characteristics of the two parents of the Tardiana Group are evident in successive generations.

As ever, I highly recommend using the <u>Hosta Register</u> and <u>Hosta</u> <u>Library</u> to find out more. The latter is a brilliant resource of images as long as you have a named starting point - good luck with your research.

Hello from Lenore

Last month Lenore and Tom visited the UK for a couple of weeks. David and I caught up with them as they started their tour from London. It was lovely to finally meet them but sad that their visit was punctuated by the death of our lovely Queen.

Lenore sends her condolences and will be back with another newsletter piece in a few months to help break up the long cold winter.

Speak soon

Team Mickfield Hostas

generations of cultivars. However, we are finding that the further away from the Tardiana Group, the less reliable the cultivars tend to be in terms of maintaining variegation and growth reliability. Time will tell whether attempts to come up with something new is occasionally compromising the characteristics.



Hosta 'El Nino' Another offspring of *H.* 'Halcyon'

Last date for mail order reminder...

The last mailing date will be **Monday 24th October.**

We will resume again in the spring; however, we can offer gift vouchers as a great alternative if you are looking for presents in the meantime.

