



Winning combinations

This month we share some of the most successful plant partnerships, which we have displayed at shows over recent years. This could be a good starting point if you were wondering which varieties to plant together in your garden...

A single genus

Mixed herbaceous borders look fantastic BUT they do take a lot of work to maintain, and they require an awful lot of plants to create maximum impact.

How about using a single genus to create your 'wow' feature? Many flowering plants have a limited season but hostas look good for a much longer period AND they look fantastic as a single genus feature, which is how we display them at flower shows across the UK each year.



You do not need to have an enormous garden to achieve a knock-out feature. We shared this particular planting combination in an earlier newsletter this year, which shows a small section of our 2014 Harrogate Spring display.

It was designed to make the most of the red petioles of *H.* 'China Girl' and *H.* 'Fire Island' by surrounding them with vibrant colours. The fresh spring foliage sings out whilst the variegation of *H.* 'Sagae' and *H.* 'Justine' help bring the colour palette together.

Unusual colour combinations in a single plant

Some say that there is no such thing as a bad combination of colour in nature but there are some challenging combinations in hostas. It can be very tricky to get the best out of some of the more popular and highly variegated varieties.

This is where container planting gives you the advantage of playing with different positions to create balance. Some varieties are too bold to plant with other variegations and need to be 'toned down', for example, *H.*

'Orange Marmalade'.

Here the blue and orange-gold of the leaves are echoed in the surrounding plants, whilst *H.* 'Devon Green' in the foreground allows the colour scheme to transition calmly into greens.



Playing with colour

Blue hostas are usually very popular, across all size ranges, and can look especially good planted together. They do like cooler weather for the best colour, as too much heat and bright light damages the blue bloom on the leaves, and makes them err towards shades of green. Bear this

Low maintenance...

The addition of hostas in a mixed planting scheme can greatly reduce the amount of work required, as they take very little maintenance. Just remember to deploy whatever pest control technique you favour, before the season gets underway - see our **FAQ page** for more details.

Using form for effect

Hostas can have quite bold forms, for example, *H.* 'Praying Hands' which we used to great effect again this year.



The image above shows it under-planted with *H.* 'Salute', another variety with upright leaves. The effect resembles an explosion of leaves emerging from the container.

in mind when looking at where you intend to plant blue varieties, and give them more shade and shelter to help preserve the bloom.



One variety we use often is *H. 'El Nino'*, the white margined sport of *H. 'Halcyon'*. This is one of the best blues ever developed. Here it is planted alongside *H. 'Mourning Dove'* with very elegant, arrow-shaped leaves and mid-green margins. This striking colour combination can be replicated on a larger scale by planting a variety such as *H. 'Barbara Ann'* or *H. 'American Halo'* with *H. 'Dark Shadows'* (below).



Large gardens can use 'hosta walks' to great advantage, simply plant either side of a walkway to create definition. They can be as simple or elaborate as your imagination allows. The image below shows a trough planted with *H. 'Sultana'* and *H. 'Just So'* sandwiched with *H. 'Pacific Blue Edger'*. The deep blue leaves of the latter provide a foil against which the other two varieties sing out:



You could choose to edge an area with a repetition of similar varieties, rather than with a single type, especially if you need to introduce colour to an area. It is very inviting to follow a meandering pathway into another section of garden, using such techniques.

Why not stand back and look at your planting scheme. Think about how you can accentuate, or tone down, what you currently have, and start introducing hostas to pull your schemes together. Take a look at our [planting pages](#) for more ideas.

Next month: [Autumn colour...](#)

The variety in the foreground container is *H. 'Curly Fries'*, a relatively new variety with deliciously elongated, rippled leaves. It changes colour during the season, when the centres turn chartreuse. The petioles are a purply-pink and the whole effect is best shown off in a container. It was included under the heading of featured plants from Tatton in this month's **The Garden**.

Selecting a variety with an upright, umbrella-shaped habit, allows you to underplant with smaller varieties. This can create a shadier, more sheltered environment for miniaures, so is an idea worth experimenting with.

Flower power

So far we haven't introduced flower colour in these combinations. Increasingly customers are requesting varieties with specific flower colours to grow in a mixed border. This is why we produced our [search page](#), which is designed to help you select a variety with the appropriate flower colour. Because all hosta flowers vary from white through to deep purple, they do not tend to clash in a hosta border, but could do in a mixed border.

Some varieties are extremely prolific and produce masses of flowers. These tend to be the smaller, less colourful varieties, which make up for their lack of obvious appeal with a riot of flower colour.

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**.

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