



Textured treasures

This month we feature the best of corrugated varieties, those wonderful plants with texture to spare. Not only are they a photographers dream, they are the most resistant varieties to pest damage...

Origins of rugosity

Heavily textured, or to give this characteristic its proper term; rugose, varieties tend to be on the larger side because they largely belong to the *H. sieboldiana* branch of the genus. Their flowers also tend to be white and very architectural, so the combination creates a 'wow' factor in any garden.

Once again we focus our attention on varieties we have in our collection, and have experience of growing, for our 'best of' list this month.



Hosta 'Frances Williams'

This well known sport of *H. 'Elegans'* does need a sheltered spot to avoid leaf scorch.

Hosta sieboldiana types

Most of the very rugose cultivars attributed to the *H. sieboldiana* branch of the family, such as *H. 'Frances Williams'* (left) actually derive from *H. 'Elegans'*, the western form of the species.

This form is still often mistakenly given species status. It is a much larger plant, much bluer and much more rugose than the true species *H. sieboldiana*. The species has a much less rugose leaf, is much greener and has a light bloom on the underside. We obtained our examples from Peter Ruh and they certainly seem to exhibit the characteristics of the true species form.

Cultivars from *H. sieboldiana* tend to be slightly slower growing but not as slow as those from *H. 'Tokudama'*, another form of *H. sieboldiana* rather than a species in its own right. Interestingly, the Royal Horticultural Society still refers to it as a species, pending their own opportunity to investigate the origins. Wild populations of *H. 'Tokudama'*, growing in isolation have yet to be identified, as it tends to be found among wild populations of *H. sieboldiana*.

The translation of Tokudama refers to the round shape of the leaves, a characteristic that combines well with rugosity, often resulting in cupped habits. It is classified as a medium sized plant, however, it can grow to giant proportions in the right conditions.



Hosta 'Abiqua Drinking Gourd'

Top 20 rugose varieties

Click on the names to find out more:

1. *H. 'Abiqua Drinking Gourd'*



2. *H. 'Barbara Ann'*



3. *H. 'Black Hills'*



4. *H. 'Bright Lights'*



5. *H. 'Brother Stefan'*



6. *H. 'Clear Fork River Valley'*

7. *H. 'Elegans'*

8. *H. 'Faith'*

9. *H. 'Frances Williams'*

10. *H. 'George Smith'*

This is certainly true of one of the most strikingly corrugated varieties in our list; *H.* 'Abiqua Drinking Gourd', which shares both *H.* 'Tokudama' and *H.* *sieboldiana* parentage. It exhibits similarities to a host of textured 'blues' but, in our opinion, it has the best colour and texture combination, topped with white flowers, it is indeed very hard to beat.

Hosta 'Clear Fork River Valley' is a deliciously deep green cultivar with a faintly glaucous bloom in spring. It is one of the most heavily rugose cultivars we have seen to date and would be an excellent planting partner for *H.* 'Johnny Angel', which shows little sign of its potential as a young plant, so it is a joy to watch it develop vibrantly yellow, highly corrugated leaves as it matures.

Another delightfully rugose cultivar, which has a slightly more convoluted route to its *H.* *sieboldiana* origins, is *H.* 'Wide Brim'. This commonly available cultivar is often found in garden centres and is another plant which takes time and maturity to show the extent of its rugosity:



Hosta 'Sunshine Glory' (opposite), is an often overlooked variety but one we have appreciated for many years. Its brightly variegated foliage accentuates the corrugations in the leaves beautifully but it does need shelter to protect the white margins from scorching.



Small textured varieties

There are a few lightly rugose varieties in the small category. Arguably the most rugose is *H.* 'Quilting Bee' (opposite), which just made our top twenty list.

Hosta 'Abiqua Trumpet' is a small blue-leaved variety, which does develop gentle rugosity as it matures, as does *H.* 'Little Aurora', a yellow-leaved cultivar. The 'heart' series is also a good choice for gentle rugosity and prolific leaf production, check out: *H.* 'Cheatin Heart', *H.* 'Faithful Heart', *H.* 'Illicit Affair'.

Limiting pest damage

Although we have seen beautiful plantings of some of these heavily corrugated varieties wrecked by snails, they do tend to be more resistant to such damage due to the tough substance of the leaves. Snail damage makes lace-work of the leaf area because they cannot munch their way through the veins and midrib of the leaves as readily as through the softer cells of the leaf. To encourage snails to eat the right foliage, try using vegetable peelings underneath your plants. As these rot down, the snails will prefer to eat this than attack your precious plants.

And, as ever, we advocate the judicious use of slug pellets used in a controlled way to help mitigate such damage. A few strategically placed jars, on their sides, with half a teaspoon of pellets to a jar, will help keep the snail population under control whilst your plants become established - more information on this trick, and other tips, can be found on our **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** page on the website.

Next month: Our annual review of the season...



11. *H.* 'Johnny Angel'
12. *H.* 'King Tut'



13. *H.* 'Lakeside Sapphire Pleats'



14. *H.* 'Lucy Vitols'
15. *H.* 'Quilting Bee'



16. *H.* 'Rainforest Sunrise'



17. *H.* 'Sea Gulf Stream'
18. *H.* 'Sunshine Glory'



19. *H.* 'Tokudama Flavocircinalis'
20. *H.* 'Wide Brim'