



Happy New Year

Welcome to our 6th year of newsletters.

This month we preview our 2012 season and highlight plants to look out for during the year...

Home and away

This year will be challenging for us as we look to make significant changes at the nursery, whilst trying to maintain our commitment to the shows we attend.

Our objective is to get more and more gardeners to appreciate hostas, and the extra dimension they add to any garden landscape. We do this by sharing our own enthusiasm for the genus directly with customers at shows, at the nursery, and through our website and newsletters.

So here are a few suggestions of what to look out for in 2012...



Bling for the garden

Regular readers will know that we like to promote the older varieties of hosta, because we feel they can be seriously overlooked. However, more recently there have been a number of introductions presenting improvement on their parents. One such variety is ***h.* 'Midnight at the Oasis'** - image on left.

It caused quite a stir at Hampton Court last year when we exhibited it as part of the story of ***h.* 'Francee'** - we sold out within the first few hours of the show. This cultivar exaggerates the leaf shape and colouring of its parent, ***h.* 'Pathfinder'**, and appears to be a

stronger grower too.

Contrast plants

There are many brightly variegated varieties, so striking they put those surrounding them in the shade - quite literally. However, they would all be shouting for attention if planted together, so you need to pick companion plants to tone down the area around the brightly variegated cultivars, for maximum impact.

One such cultivar, we used extensively last year in our displays, is ***h.* 'Nightlife'**. This is a very useful hosta for the garden. It has dark, matt green leaves and fragrant lavender flowers - see below right. It is a medium-sized cultivar having a pleasingly neat habit, producing an evenly layered mound. Although it isn't new this year, it is one we expect to use again, so keep an eye out for it.



We have noticed a recent trend for developing single leaf colour varieties to exaggerate characteristics such as rippled margins and intense rugosity. Two cultivars to look out for this year are ***h.* 'Neptune'** and ***h.* 'Clear Fork River Valley'**. *H.* 'Neptune' has intensely

blue, elongated leaves with very rippled margins. The plant has a prostrate habit with very long, arching flower scapes - it would make an architectural statement in

On the road...

Once again we will be on our travels across the country in 2012.

Below is our calendar to date:

26-29 April 2012

Harrogate Spring Flower Show

Details to follow

10-13 May 2012

Malvern Spring Gardening Show

We will be in the same places in the Floral Marquee (**MF23**) and outside (beside the Rock Garden), as last year.

27 May 2012

Plant Heritage Spring Plant Fair

Helmingham Hall

13-17 June 2012

Gardeners' World Live

This year we will be in the Floral Marquee, Hall 16 stand **FM96** - click on map to view.



We will be opposite the 'Birmingham Feature'

3-8 July 2012

Hampton Court Palace Flower Show

a container. *H.* 'Clear Fork River Valley' has rich dark green, intensely textured leaves - we cannot wait for this one to mature.

Collectors plants

There are always lots of tempting new varieties being introduced, but we need to assess these carefully to see which we think are worth including in our National Collection, and offering for sale. There is also the danger that new varieties may appear only briefly because they do not reliably reproduce through tissue culture.



This often forces our hand to take a risk on offering a new variety for sale. Last year *h.* 'Pistache' fell into this category. This cultivar is a sport of *h.* 'Spilt Milk' a notoriously unstable variety that has a high level of reversion. When *h.* 'Spilt Milk' retains its subtle splashed variegation it is fabulous, but we suspected that the more striking variegation of *h.* 'Pistache' might be even harder to maintain. However, since adding it to our collection it has thrived, so we felt confident to offer it for sale last year, and will have more for sale again in 2012.

Red-stemmed beauties

Recent trends, such as the development of varieties with more vibrant coloured petioles and flower scapes, continue. This year is no exception as we will have another selection for sale. Perhaps the most vibrantly coloured scapes are those of *h.* 'China Girl', which look like forced rhubarb topped with very dark green foliage - a stunning plant, especially for a container.

H. 'Fruit Punch' (right) is a striking cultivar, which was photographed on our Malvern Spring Flower Show exhibit last year, and subsequently featured in the gardening press.

It has golden yellow foliage, which becomes lime green as the season progresses. In our opinion, it is a stronger-growing, more luxuriant version of *h.* 'Fire Island'.



H. 'Tickle Me Pink' is a yellow-leaved sport of *h.* 'One man's Treasure'. It has the rich red petioles of the parent and the colouring shows up really well against the bright yellow leaves. It would be a great companion plant for *h.* 'One man's Treasure', especially in containers designed to show off the petioles.

Finally (for now)...

This year the largest variety we will be offering for sale will be *h.* 'Empress Wu', and the smallest, *h.* 'Cat's Eye'. We will also have some aptly named varieties for sale, such as *h.* 'Titanic', *h.* 'Jubilee' and many with 'olympic' in the name. Our full availability list will be on the website very soon but if you would like to find out about any specific variety then give us a call - we are always happy to advise, and to reserve plants for sending out in the spring.

Next month: We feature another classic cultivar, *h.* 'Krossa Regal'

We are delighted to be involved in a newly designed feature, The Plant Village, which will be situated in the Thames Area (formerly Area A). We also hope to be involved with Plant Heritage again and will pass on the details as soon as we have them.

18-22 July 2012

Tatton Park Flower Show

This year we will be in the Floral Marquee, **stand FM20**. This is very near to where we were last year, so you can't miss us!



14-16 September 2012

Harrogate Autumn Show

Details to follow

16 September 2012

Autumn Plant Fair

Helmingham Hall

Other shows

We plan to apply for the smaller RHS shows, held at Wisley and Hyde Hall, when applications are invited.

We have also been approached to exhibit at the Suffolk Show. We will add these to our calendar if we are successful with our applications.

Keep an eye on our calendar and forthcoming newsletters for more details.

The advice and opinions contained within this monthly newsletter have been formed over more than 35 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**.