



Welcome to the August newsletter

This month we feature *h.* 'Invincible', another classic cultivar with characteristics desirable to both the gardener, and hosta breeder. We also highlight a new report from Which? concerning mail order plants...

H. 'Invincible'

Not much is known about the origins of this cultivar, beyond the details registered in 1986 by the breeder, Paul Aden of Baldwin, New York.

Paul used his own numbering system for his plants and listed two seedlings; #314 and #802 as the 'pod' and 'pollen' parents, respectively. This means we are not able to identify the parentage of this lovely cultivar but we can be assured that one strand would lead back to

h. plantaginea.

The registered dimensions for *h.* 'Invincible' are a little on the small size at 10" tall by 12" wide. Other hosta specialists state the plant mound grows up to 20" tall by 48" wide. In our experience, a container grown *h.* 'Invincible' reaches around 14" tall by 36" wide, but looks as though it could exceed these dimensions if grown in the ground.



The foliage is highly glossy and the green very rich, which makes it an eye-catching plant in any situation.

The topping of pale lavender, fragrant flowers is a definite bonus. However, here the registered details differ again as the flowers are stated as being white. In truth the difference between white and very pale lavender is so subtle as to be inconsequential to most gardeners.

The wavy margins of the leaves help to define them, when they are layered in the plant mound, and cast interesting shadows over the leaves below.

We frequently use *h.* 'Invincible' in our flower show exhibits because of its lovely glossy foliage and pleasingly neat, layered habit - see photo.

H. 'Invincible' family

We are only aware of one sport from *h.* 'Invincible', which is *h.* 'Sugar and Spice', which was registered in 2003 by Q & Z Nursery.

Mail order from Mickfield Hostas

Which? has just produced a report on the mail order of plants, 'Better Plants by Post'. The report lists 10 criteria they feel all suppliers should observe. Interestingly, our mail order service addresses these 10 criteria, but it would be difficult to achieve this without the most important element of the process, customer communication.

Our service

The plants we sell will be at the optimum stage for successful transplantation, whether purchased from the nursery, sold at shows or sent mail order.

We never send plugs.

We seldom need to substitute for a different variety, and only do this after consultation with our customers.

We send plants bare-rooted for two reasons:

1. This gives us the opportunity to check the whole plant before dispatch, preparing it for planting

2. There is no point charging postage on pots and soil when hostas are happy to travel bare-rooted.



H. 'Sugar and Spice' is the result of putting *h.* 'Invincible' through the tissue culture process. The white margins of this cultivar exaggerate the wavy-edged leaves. The grey streaking, from the white margins to the midrib, accentuate the arrow-shaped leaves beautifully. What is more, the leaves are just as glossy as the parent - what a combination, especially as the plant matures and the number of leaves multiply.

H. 'Invincible' has good fertility, so is popular among breeders wishing to improve on its key characteristics. There have been a number of cultivars developed - those we hold in our collection include (in no particular order):



H. 'Dixie Chick'



H. 'Fragrant Star'



H. 'Shady Affair'



H. 'Irish Luck'



H. 'Red Stepper'



H. 'Sweet Bo Peep'



H. 'Moonlight Sonata'



H. 'Rosedale Barnie'



H. 'Slick Willie'



H. 'Nightlife'

Most cultivars derived from *h.* 'Invincible' have fragrant flowers, the exceptions are *h.* 'Red Stepper', *h.* 'Rosedale Barnie' and *h.* 'Slick Willie'. A particular favourite of ours is *h.* 'Nightlife' (opposite). This cultivar is fast becoming a 'must use' plant in our show displays due to the depth of leaf colour. It has a blue tinge to the green which makes it invaluable as a foil for more brightly coloured hostas - we love it!

We use Royal Mail first class service wherever possible. This usually means the consignment reaches our customer the day after dispatch. We routinely dispatch on a Thursday ready for the weekend. However, we can adjust dispatch days if requested, and send to alternative addresses when necessary.

It does help us greatly if customers inform us of dates when they will not be able to accept deliveries.

We accept orders by email, fax and telephone, and are happy to take orders at shows.

We accept payment by cheque or credit/debit card. If using the latter method we prefer to contact our customers by telephone for card details. We do not use third party payment methods because of the costs to small businesses.

Our bottom line is that we send plants we would be happy to receive.

In the event of any problems arising, we will require the return of plants, with our labels as proof of purchase, to enable us to investigate. Any complaints should be within a reasonable timescale, i.e. during the season of purchase.

We pride ourselves on our **mail order service**, and have many satisfied customers who come back to us year after year, so why not give us a go?

Next month: We feature *h.* 'Little Aurora'...

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**.

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