



Welcome to spring...

Well, we are considering it to be here anyway, with the bright sunshine and warmer weather.

Indeed it bears little resemblance to the end of February 2013, when our plants were firmly frozen in the soil, and remained that way into April. Fingers crossed for better seasonal weather this year...

Hosta 'Fortunei Hyacinthina'

This cultivar seems to have been another of those indeterminate sports, which happen so often in the *Hosta* world...

According to Schmid, in *The Genus Hosta*, *H. 'Fortunei Hyacinthina'* evolved in von Siebold's English garden before his death. Therefore, it cannot be considered among his collection imported from Japan - see [previous newsletter](#).

Alongside obvious links to *H. 'Fortunei'*, it exhibits several characteristics akin to the species *H. nigrescens*, such as a similar shaped leaves, habit and colouring - see image opposite. *Hyacinthina* means violet and refers to the flowers, and to the violet tinge to the blue leaves, especially in spring.



H. 'Fortunei Hyacinthina' shown here at Tatton Park Flower Show in 2012. The leaves are very glaucous, even in July.

Whatever it's true origins, it is arguably the most significant member of the *H. 'Fortunei'* branch of the genus, having produced some notable offspring, which have been agreed, and a couple of disputed beauties, which feature overleaf.

As ever, we have restricted the list to those we hold in our collection, so it is not exhaustive:



H. 'Camouflage'

H. 'Camouflage' and *H. 'Heliarc'* share similar olive colouring and look very much like another of the *H. 'Fortunei'* family, *H. 'Fool's Gold'*. However, they keep their colouring throughout the season, unlike *H. 'Fool's Gold'*.



H. 'Heliarc'



H. 'Crowned Imperial'

Both *H. 'Crowned Imperial'* and *H. 'Julia'* have very fine white margins. The former is much bluer than the latter, which is a rich dark green.



H. 'Julia'

Spring into action...

The soil is warm enough to encourage slugs to emerge, so now is the time to hit them with your preferred treatment. To be honest we have never suffered much slug damage at the nursery. We find that once the shoots emerge, they harden off quickly, making them too tough for slugs to eat. We have also found negligible damage to those fresh shoots, which might have happened prior to emergence.

However, it won't be long before snails join in, and they are the real nuisance.

Take our advice, or read the excellent article on **Slugs and Snails** in this month's issue of **The Garden**, the RHS magazine.

At the nursery...

We have finally had the poplar trees at the nursery entrance cut down. This has opened up the driveway considerably. Click on the images below to view:





H. 'Gold Standard'

H. 'Gold Standard' and *H. 'Sheila West'* look so similar when mature, it is difficult to tell them apart though generally the former has a wider margin. *H. 'Gold Standard'* has produced many popular modern cultivars - see our **April 2008 newsletter** for more information.



H. 'Sheila West'



H. 'Helen Field Fischer'

H. 'Wayne' is the revised name for *H. 'Fortunei Hyacinthina Variegated'*. The name acknowledges the location of the registered clump, Wayne County, Ohio.



H. 'Wayne'

Missing from this list are two cultivars, which have both been attributed to *H. 'Fortunei Hyacinthina'* at some point: *H. 'Praying Hands'* and *H. 'Whirlwind'*.



H. 'Whirlwind'

This cultivar was registered by John Kulpa in 1989 as a sport of *H. 'Fortunei Hyacinthina'*. However, Mark Zilis states this to have not been proven in *The Hostapedia*. This is a puzzle, especially as he doesn't give any reason why. We cannot unearth anything which would cast doubt on the accepted origin and would love to know more. Until we know otherwise, we are happy to consider *H. 'Fortunei Hyacinthina'* to be the parent of *H. 'Whirlwind'*. They certainly share similar leaf shapes and an upright plant habit.

H. 'Praying Hands'

This intriguing cultivar was discovered for sale in a Minnesota nursery in 1991. The nursery owners didn't know anything about it but Zilis states the parentage is likely to be either *H. 'Fortunei Gloriosa'* or *H. 'Fortunei Hyacinthina'*. The former has the correct colouring, and what looks like a more probable leaf shape. However, on the rare occasions when a leaf of *H. 'Praying Hands'* reverts, it exhibits more characteristics of the latter, especially a lack of variegation and a much broader leaf shape.



It took quite a lot of machinery, time and skill to take them down safely, on the left side of the entrance...



... and on the right:



It was very interesting to watch, so we thought we would share it with you:



Just remember, if you plan to visit us this year, the nursery entrance looks quite different, and we would hate you to zoom past and miss us. Once we have tidied up we will take a photo of the entrance for our homepage - just in case.

Next month: A 'behind the scenes' look at preparations for the show season...

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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