



Welcome to the July newsletter as summer seems to have eventually arrived.

This month we are looking at growing hostas, investigating whether it is possible to control the height and spread of a variety through containment. If it is possible then there is potential to create some really miniature hostas...

The long and short of it

A few years ago we split *h.* 'Amy Elizabeth' as part of our collection plant maintenance. Left with a final small piece we popped this into a bonsai pot fearing it would get lost in one of the regular size pots. Needless to say, we didn't get around to re-potting the plant into a regular sized pot but this doesn't seem to have affected the plant's growth. Indeed it has flourished but at a fraction of the size of what the characteristics of *h.* 'Amy Elizabeth' would dictate.

As the photograph shows, the restricted *h.* 'Amy Elizabeth' is around half its expected growth size. The size of the leaves and the height of the flower spikes are in direct proportion, even the flowers look as though they may be half their expected size when they unfurl. The resulting plant looks like a bonsai version of the original!



bonsai: the art of cultivating ornamental artificially dwarfed varieties of trees and shrubs.

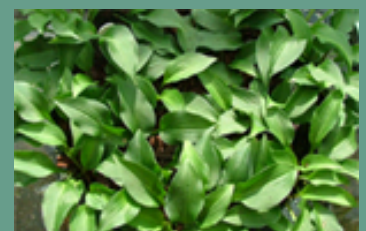
Potential candidates for the bonsai treatment might be:



H. 'Radio Waves'



H. 'Cat's Eye'



H. 'Paradise Puppet'

Hostas that become too crowded in their pots tend to produce smaller leaves, particularly in the centre of the plant mound. Eventually the over-crowded parts of the plant mound will die back. This is why hostas benefit from splitting when they become too densely packed as this helps ensure the plant retains its characteristics. This fundamental fact about hosta growth is why we haven't previously considered restricting our plants - perhaps we now can?

Hostas in a bonsai landscape

Bonsai growers are always in need of plants they can use within their landscape arrangements. Obviously suitable plants need to be in scale with the landscape under construction.

There have been many 'miniature' hosta cultivars introduced over recent years that could be used to compliment some of the larger-scale bonsai landscapes. However, many of these cultivars still appear rather large in this context.

So, could some of these miniature cultivars be grown even smaller in the same way as *h.* 'Amy Elizabeth'? We think they could, but perhaps only temporarily as containment will eventually have an adverse effect on the habit of a hosta. Some

parts of the plant mound would probably begin to die back if overcrowded for too long. A key characteristic of hostas is their generally speedy growth rate. As a consequence it should be possible to contain successive pieces of a plant in order to supply a series of complimentary plants for use in bonsai landscapes.



Photo courtesy of [Mendip Bonsai](#)

We have listed some miniature varieties in the side column, which could be especially suitable for this treatment.

Each variety is already among the smallest of the miniature category and containment could reduce their size even further. In particular, varieties such as h. 'Yakushima Mizu' and h. 'Paradise Puppet' could produce a good supply of tiny plants for bonsai displays as they are vigorous growers, producing small but perfectly formed carpets of leaves in a short space of time.



Varieties such as h. 'Radio Waves' (on the right) might prove more temperamental to grow in a contained way but it is already one of the smallest cultivars, so a likely candidate for further miniaturisation.

A smaller version of h. 'Radio Waves', with its exotic habit, would be an ideal addition to a bonsai arrangement.

So we suggest you give it a go and try to create some 'contained' miniature hostas for yourself.

Just remember that they may not last very

long restricted in this way and perhaps should be allowed to return to their natural size if they begin to look stressed.

Weather warning

Recently we have had some very warm winds that have sapped everything of moisture. If you have your hostas in containers then do remember to ensure they have sufficient water not to dry out.

We recommend the use of a saucer or tray underneath your pot and keep that filled with water - the plant will then take all it needs without you needing to worry if you are over-watering.

PSST... from one extreme to the other.

We have just split one of our parent plants of h. 'Herkules', a giant blue hosta, and have a limited number of sales plants now available at £12.00 each (plus £5.00 P&P).

Next month: We look at h. *plantaginea*, the source of all fragrant cultivars...

The advice and opinions contained within this monthly newsletter have been formed over more than 30 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](#).



H. 'Green Mouse Ears'



H. 'Country Mouse'



H. 'Imp'



H. 'Lakeside Elfin Fire'



H. 'Popo'



H. 'Yakushima Mizu'