



The 2013 Season

We reflect on another season of mixed fortunes, largely due to the challenging weather conditions. Once again, the plants have been the temperamental stars of the show...

A late start...

Although we have had some strange springs in recent years, this was the coldest, and latest, we have known, since turning our hosta hobby into a business. We consoled ourselves that the late spring might mean a prolonged season. However, this certainly hasn't been the case this year. We had a definite summer, which began in June and ended abruptly on Friday 6th September. The quick change to markedly cooler and wetter conditions, convinced the plants that the season was at an end, and the leaves have been giving us an early example of the glorious colour palette of autumn.

Show round-up

The cold spring also lacked bright days, which meant that the hostas emerged and then stopped, unfurled a little, and then stopped. It was as if they were testing the conditions as they went.

This threw our display plans for the **Harrogate Spring Flower Show** out of the window, and we had to quickly put together an educational display instead. The display was very well received by the judges and visitors to the show - photos and full details can be read in our **May newsletter**. We had big crowds around our stand for most of the show. However, that may have been another by-product of the cold weather, and our proximity to the toilets?

We had a few warmer days at the start of May and had a very pleasant day at a plant sale held by **Wootens of Wenham**. This was a lovely event, which attracted lots of visitors, it was a shame the cold weather had delayed the irises flowering period in their iris beds.



We set off for the **Malvern Spring Flower Show** in warm conditions and spent the build-up days basking on the heat of the marquee. Once the show opened, it was a different story and the showground was again lashed by wind and rain for yet another year. We have got used to packing all manner of clothes and waterproofs for this show and usually end up using everything. Unfortunately, the plants had still not fully unfurled - but they still looked lovely and vibrant.

Plant Heritage held a **'Festival of Plants'** at the Cambridge Botanical Gardens in mid May. Although the event had a good turn out, the last thing visitors were thinking of was gardening in such awful conditions. The Plant Heritage event, at **Helmingham Hall**, which happened at the end of May, was also disappointing this year probably due to the same reasons.

Finally, at the **Suffolk Show**, we experienced the first really positive vibes from visitors about getting out into their gardens. This year the weather was much kinder to the show and we had a great time there. We enjoyed it so much we decided to

Season highlights

We closed the nursery for the season yesterday and would like to thank all our visitors throughout the year - it has been another record breaker thanks to you...

Awards

Once again we had a great year for medals awarded for our displays at the flower shows:

Harrogate Spring
Premier Gold and the
NEHS Challenge Cup
Malvern Spring
Silver
Suffolk Show
Gold
Gardeners' World
Gold
Royal Norfolk
Gold
Hampton Court
Gold
Tatton Park
Gold
Harrogate Autumn
Premier Gold

Educational display successes

This year we staged a planned educational display at Hampton Court Flower Show, and an impromptu one at Harrogate Spring Flower Show. Both were very well received by visitors to the shows and were awarded a Gold Medal and Premier Gold Medal respectively.

accept an offer from the Royal Norfolk to exhibit at their Show.

We did a one day plant fair at **East Ruston** vicarage in Norfolk at the beginning of June. Fantastic gardens, and a brilliant collection of local nurseries, ensured visitors enjoyed themselves. BBC Radio Norfolk held a gardeners' question time event in the marquee and there were lots of talks and advice sessions on offer throughout the day. It was a very well organised and supported event.

Gardeners' World Live at the NEC

heralded the first real sustained warmth for the year. This year our display was half the size of last year, but we still managed to feature lots of varieties in the space. Comparing this display with the one at Malvern, it looks like a 'before and after' scenario...

Our next outing was to **Chippenham Park** near Ely, for a one day plant fair as part of a garden open event. We recommend this beautiful park as a must see, with some inspiring vistas, naturally planted areas, and charming feature gardens.



The Royal Norfolk Show was delightful, especially the opportunity to get to see the behind the scenes preparation for a large agricultural show. This is something we haven't been able to do since we were children and it was great. The show was good and we had a lot of interest from visitors keen to come to the nursery, which was our main reason for attending.

This year at **Hampton Court** we staged a large display consisting of several elements - details of which can be found in the **July** and **August** newsletters. After the prolonged cold, it was certainly too hot to think straight at Hampton Court and we were totally in awe of the two guys who routinely donned their rubber and plastic flower pots to circulate among the crowds - see opposite.

Tatton Park Flower Show followed and was very enjoyable. Mel built her favourite display of the year but forgot to take her camera to capture it! The weather was brilliant for the event up until the Sunday when the heavens opened and torrential downpours created new water features in the marquee. This meant we had to carry the entire display out to the lorry, piece by piece - phew!

Our final two shows were at Wisley and Harrogate, at the start of September. **Wisley Flower Show** was a pleasure to exhibit at this year. It was sultry and hot until the Friday and then autumn seemed to arrive overnight. The rain was fat, heavy and cold and effectively called a halt to proceedings.



The weather continued to challenge at the **Harrogate Autumn Show**.

Mel tried to replicate the Tatton Park display, with quite a few of the plants she used there, interspersed with many varieties she had not used all season. The moss dressing was looking decidedly brown but didn't detract too much from the overall look.

A two-day Plant Heritage plant sale at **Hyde Hall**, rounded off the season.

Next month: A look at the *H. 'Fortunei'* series of cultivars...

Fashion trends

We were delighted to see Jim Blyth's typically Suffolk 'savoir faire' with this impromptu invention:



We complimented him on his colour choice of blue bailer twine - well done Jim!



The heroes of Hampton Court Flower Show?



Despite the heat, these two chaps regularly donned heavy, rubber and plastic flower pot outfits, to entertain the crowds in the Grow Section of the show - what stars!

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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