



## Red-stemmed beauties

This month we feature varieties of hosta that are classed as 'red-stemmed' and highlight those we feel have become modern classics.

Our side column lists our top-ten red-stemmed cultivars and we meet the 'girly girls' of Wisconsin...

## The definition of 'red'

Red-stemmed varieties range in petiole colour from the palest of pink to the deepest purple, and all shades in between. They differ in the amount of 'red' colouring from very subtle mottling to almost total coverage of the petiole, and they also differ in how high up the petiole they exhibit their 'red' colouring. The amount of red in the petiole varies widely but when you start looking, you can see a lot more varieties have a tinge of red - quite often near the base of the petiole.



The images on the left, and below, show the petioles and leaf bases of ***h.* 'One Man's Treasure'**. This cultivar exhibits the deepest red mottling we have seen so far and compliments the rich dark green foliage very well. The red mottling extends into the leaf and a little way along the veins:



It appears the goal to breed a red-leaved hosta, but it probably wouldn't be a good grower. Many red-stemmed cultivars effectively conceal their stems due to a low growing habit.

***H.* 'Torchlight'** has an upright habit - see right.



There are quite a few lovely bright yellow leaved cultivars with bright red mottled petioles and flower scapes - a particular favourite of ours is ***h.* 'Fire Island'**. This cultivar is early to emerge and does so with bright yellow leaves. The leaves gradually turn a fresh green during the season but all new growth emerges yellow. This makes for an interesting display of mixed leaf colour on top of the bright red petioles - lovely! ***H.* 'Paradise Island'** is a sport of ***h.* 'Fire Island'**, which has the same characteristics but with green margins to the leaves. This adds another twist

## Our top-ten red-stemmed varieties



***h.* 'Cherry Berry'**

An explosion of colour



***h.* 'Fire Island'**

Striking spring colour



***h.* 'Harry van de Laar'**

Intense red stems with pale green leaves



***h.* 'Miss Ruby'**

Rich red stems and fabulous red-purple flowers



***h.* 'Ophir'**

Shiny claret petiole bases

to the foliage display, and makes it look like someone has outlined each leaf with a green pen.

Another interesting cultivar is *h.* 'Ophir', which looks as though the petioles have been dipped in a pot of irridescent red paint. When the light catches the plant, the petiole bases shine.

This year we have another clutch of red-stemmed varieties to add to our ever-growing list, including:



*h.* 'Bedford Rise and Shine'  
Cherry Tart  
Chopsticks



*h.* 'Coconut Custard'  
*h.* 'Ebony Towers'  
*h.* 'Fruit Punch'  
*h.* 'Marrakech'  
*h.* 'Purple Haze'  
*h.* 'Scallion Pancakes'  
*h.* 'Tickle Me Pink'

A more recent trend is for cultivars with deeper smokey purple petioles, such as *h.* 'Peacock Strut' and *h.* 'Purple Haze', which has a subtle tinge of purple extending into the leaf.

As the list of red-stemmed varieties continues to grow we have created a separate listing for them - both alphabetical and according to plant mound size. If you are looking for some of these cultivars to add to your collection why not **start here?**

#### Finally - what are the best-dressed folks of Wisconsin sporting this season?

Mickfield Hostas bags, of course - the very latest 'must-have' accessory for the well-dressed gardener. Here is Randy, a hostaholic of our acquaintance, pictured with his 'girly girls' showing off their bags.

Click on the photo to see what a glamorous gardening club they make...



**Next month:** [More details about our 2011 Show season...](#)



*h.* 'One Man's Treasure'  
Deep burgundy petioles  
and dark green leaves



*h.* 'Peacock Strut'  
Smokey purple petioles  
and scapes



*h.* 'Purple Haze'  
Smokey purple haze  
spreads up into leaves



*h.* 'Raspberries and  
Cream'  
Striking petioles & flowers



*h.* 'Torchlight'  
Upright red stems

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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