



MICKFIELD HOSTAS



Dear Subscriber

The season gets started - slowly!

It is surprising that, despite the promise of an early spring, most plants are emerging when we would expect, which includes our Hostas. There are masses of shoots poking through the soil but only the usual suspects, such as those from the *H. montana* branch of the genus (see side column), have leaves unfurling as yet.

Tatton Trim

Many miniature cultivars are edging ahead of the rest, but they do tend to have a longer season. You can extend the season of many miniatures by removing their foliage towards the end of July, we call it the 'Tatton Trim' as we do this when we get back to the nursery after the Tatton Park Show. Doing this encourages the plants to have a second flush of leaves into the autumn, which can often be more luxuriant than the first.

Although we haven't experienced the penetrating frosts of previous winters, the nights have been sufficiently cold to stop-start the progress of emergence. The plus side of this is that the leaves harden off as they emerge gradually and this helps them look more characteristic. If you try to force a more rapid unfurling of the leaves you risk damage from late frosts and the leaves tend to have less resistance to pest damage because they are less robust.

We have tried over previous years to bring forward our plants but they never look as good as when they are allowed to come through naturally. All good things are worth the wait. The downside to choosing not to bring forward plants is a reduced range from which to select for the early shows.

We are currently preparing for our first show of the season, keeping our fingers crossed for warmer weather to make a difference before we load the lorry, and travel up the A1 to Harrogate.

The nursery is now open...

However, the National Collection is still only just emerging, and still undergoing a slight re-organisation as we repair benching. Visitors are always welcome but if you are wanting to browse the collection we recommend you visit from May onwards.

Team Mickfield

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Tunnel 1 open for business...

Tunnel 1 is now ready for the start of the season with freshly concreted pathways and emerging foliage.

[Click on the image to view.](#)



Early risers...

Members of the [Hosta montana](#) branch of the genus are usually the first to emerge in the spring. This is an interesting species, the status of which has been debated over time. Indeed, looking back to when we wrote a [two-part feature](#) on the variety in 2010, we were referring to it as a cultivar. Also, looking back, we were neglecting to follow some nomenclature conventions. If you can forgive us these faux pas read on to discover more about *Hosta montana*.