

August 2023



Enjoying the fruits of your labours...

Following on from last month, we share some more photos of our collection hostas, especially from Tunnel 3 where we have laid out the plants in a more inviting way.

This is the time of year when we hope to spend more time in the garden, enjoying our beautiful summer weather. As ever, this is a movable feast, so we need to seize the moments the weather allows but do try to find time to enjoy all your hard work.



Dead-heading

Both the National Collection tunnels are awash with the lavender hues of the hosta flowers, and so we need to get in to dead-head and avoid the mess the flowers can create when they die back and stick to the leaves.



This job involves a lot of bending and stretching and a good amount of time too. We like to leave the flower buds on the parent plants so visitors can admire their beauty prior to opening. However, this means multiple trips through the tunnels to remove the flowers that have 'gone over'.

From my perspective the plants look infinitely better once the flowers have been removed, as I am not a huge fan, but the knowledge that the pollinators make great use of them is enough to keep my scateurs from advancing too soon.

Reflections on quitting the sport of exhibiting

As this issue of the newsletter reaches you we will be at the [RHS Hyde Hall Summer Show](#).

This year is the last time we will be attending the event, and all other display-based shows, for a number of reasons.

The most important reason is the fact that building displays gets ever harder and more exacting. So I have decided to retire from the sport.

It is very stressful to try to maintain pristine plants late into the season, when the weather can play such havoc with the leaf quality. This year the plants were subjected to a cold wet spring, which went on so long even some the most robust cultivars were left sufficiently



Propagating

Given a bit more time recently we have been doing some propagating of excess parent plants and popping the pieces into Tunnel 1, sometimes they go in with a higher price tag if they are from a more mature parent. When you divide a more mature plant you will see the benefits quite quickly. The characteristics of that cultivar are already well established so the plant will more rapidly reach a good size post division.



We do have some varieties for sale, which we haven't had for a long time, or perhaps ever. If someone is on our wish list for that variety then they get contacted to see if they still want a piece, otherwise they will be in the sales tunnel at the start of next season ready for the first open weekends in May 2024.



damaged to render them unsuitable for exhibiting.

I noticed at Chelsea this year, when visiting the numerous hosta displays, none of them were unscathed. In all fairness it was over half way through the show and the water supplied is very limey. A family of foxes decided to visit the Great Pavilion one night at Chelsea this year, which resulted in quite a bit of damage. Those poor exhibitors who were affected might have reasonably thought once the plants were embedded in the displays and every last sprig of moss was spruced to perfection, they could relax. But no, nature has the last laugh at our feeble attempts to control anything.

I am only too pleased to leave all that nonsense behind but every now and then I am reminded of it, and this year it took a visit from a flower arranger to bring it all flooding back to me. As she picked her way through our sales plants, looking for perfection in leaves which had been out since April, she was bemoaning the fact that some of the cultivars she really liked were not perfect enough for her use. She was, of course, only looking to use one or two leaves in her creations and any of those plants had sufficiently good enough leaves for that purpose. I pointed this out to her explaining that exhibitors have to produce well in excess of 100 plants for a large display. Each plant needing to be

Last events of 2023

We do have a number of events before the end of the season after Hyde Hall. The first is at Hethersett for [Norfolk Plant Heritage](#) on Sunday 27th August. I will be in the Village Hall with a small display of hostas and lots for sale, which will include some of the divided specials as the focus will be on hostas.

The weekend after that we will be at [Somerleyton Hall](#) on Sunday 3rd September and then [East Ruston](#) on Saturday 9th September. Finally we will be at the [Helmingham Autumn Plant Fair](#) on Sunday 17th September to wrap up the season – [event links on website](#).



Open Weekends

We have had all our open weekends for 2023 and need to get moving on the landscaping work, which has been delayed for around 18 months due to the extremes of wet and dry we have experienced. We are happy to open by appointment, if you decide you cannot wait for 2024, but you will need to give us a few days' notice to avoid disappointment.

We will post our open weekend dates early in the New Year, once we had a better idea of our nursery visits, plant fairs and talks commitments.



perfect, in every way but apparently I didn't understand the level of perfection required!

I realised the pursuit of perfection seems to be a big hang-up across so many areas of life and, although I cannot airbrush the hosta leaves as you can a digital image, I have been known to brush hosta leaves to remove blemishes prior to judging at flower shows.

When I catch people looking in depth at the slightest of blemishes in a leaf my heart sinks. How are you ever going to see some of these marks from the distance most of us will be looking? I usually make a flippant remark about getting older, with less acute eyesight being a blessing, so you can't detect these things but inwardly I feel really quite desperate. It would be rude to suggest a bit of perspective is required, so I grind my teeth silently.

Over the course of our exhibiting life we have to take some of this blame. The quality of display largely correlates to the award received, which determines in very large part to whether your application to the following year's event will be successful. As a consequence show visitors expect to be able to grow their own plants as flawlessly regardless of the stresses they are under. I briefly cover exhibiting in my talks and ask the audience how they feel about the displays they see at flower shows. Many

Garden Club visits

This year we have had several very successful garden club visits to the nursery, which are always fun. There is nothing like welcoming visitors to the nursery and we like it even better when we can convince a hosta non-believer into leaving the sanctuary of their car to join their hosta-holic partner/friend on a tour. They often concede just how wonderful hostas are, and that perhaps they don't mind a few more for the garden.



Garden club/horticultural society talks

This has been another very busy year for talks and I still have a couple left to do before the end of the season. It is so encouraging to visit groups of keen gardeners, of all ages. If you want to find out more visit our website or get in touch in the usual way.

I will be taking a closer look at these wonderful clubs next month as Lenore joins me to sing the praises of sharing our garden spaces and our love of hostas. Until then, happy garden relaxing.



Team Mickfield Hostas

Copyright © Mickfield Hostas 2023, All rights reserved.

accept that what they are seeing involves a modicum of artifice but many express their frustrations with their own attempts at growing plants and seeing such perfection can make them intimidated rather than inspired. I have watched so many visitors pass by a display and shrug their shoulders in defeat before even trying. Believe me, where hostas are concerned, so many people have been led to believe that any attempt at growing them will result in them being eaten. This presents the perfect excuse not to try.

This was the main reason I turned to staging educational displays as I really wanted visitors to stop getting hung up about perfection and discover the joy of growing hostas. I like to think it helped encourage a few more folks to give them a go anyway.

Gardening can be hard work but the results give so much pleasure, so try to find time this summer to wallow in all your hard work and, if it helps, squint a little to stop noticing the imperfections. Celebrate the successes and chalk up the failures to experience, from which we all grow.