

August 2024



Extending the hosta season

This month I look at ways to extend the season for your hostas, and Lenore reports on the recent Maine Hosta Society's 'Hosta Auction Day' – just look at those mouth-watering hostas stacked everywhere:

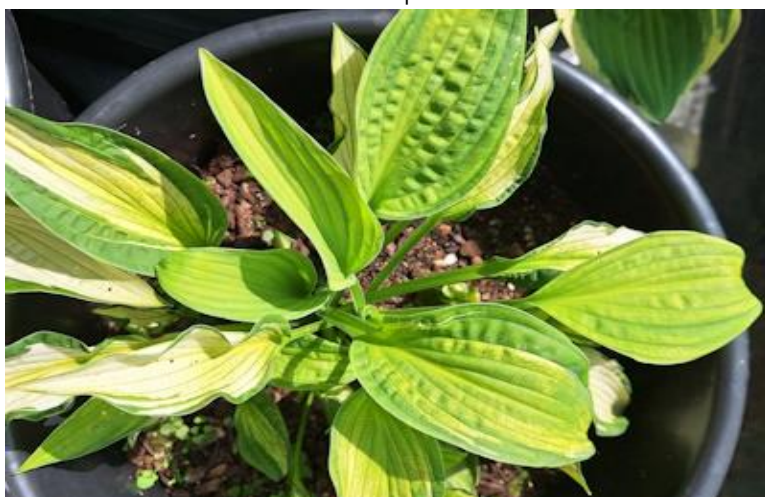


A second flush

Dead-heading, weeding and watering is the maintenance mantra for this time of the year, together with the early removal of spent leaves. The mild winter ensured an earlier start to the season. Consequently, the leaves have become a little tired looking after all their work producing sugars.

Removing faded and tired leaves redirects the plant's energy into the production of fresh new leaves. Often the second flush is even better than the first and it can create an interesting effect when the fresh growth overlays the older leaves. In some cases, the colours are more vibrant, in others the variegation takes a little while to appear.

[Hosta 'Brenda's Beauty'](#) (below) is showing new growth yet to develop the stunning variegation of the older leaves, which you can see underneath the new ones – but the promise is there:



Dead-heading

The best way to encourage fresh growth on your hosta, and extend its season, is to remove the flowers. If you are not bothered about the flowers then don't let the plant waste it's hard-earned energy on their production. Simply remove them as far down the flower scape as you can without damaging the leaves.

Doing this helps prevent the cut flower scapes looking unsightly and it also help prevent them turning into sharp sticks that can catch you unawares. If, like me, you enjoy the pre-flowering bud forms then wait a bit longer but the sooner you remove them the sooner the plant can get back to the production of new growth. As with many perennials it takes a lot of energy to produce flowers so if

During routine maintenance I noticed with surprise [H. 'Holy Mouse Ears'](#) developing a second flush of leaves:



The variegated 'mouse ears' series has disappointed over the years. failing to grow as strongly as [H. 'Blue Mouse Ears'](#), so perhaps this one has turned a corner – it is probably 10 years old at least!

NOTE: I do have to exclude [H. 'Mini Skirt'](#) from this generalisation as that is the exception proving the rule, in our experience.

When dividing plants, I do like to retain as many leaves as possible as this helps the divisions settle better, especially if I am dividing earlier on in the season. However, sometimes the leaves can be so damaged that it is better to remove them and rely on the additional nutrient in the new soil to kick start the production of new growth, which is what happened when Roy recently divided [H. 'Phyllis Campbell'](#) – see side column.

I used to call the removal of tired leaves our 'Tatton Trim' because if I wanted select cultivars to be looking exhibit worthy for our autumn shows, the Tatton Flower Show was the reminder to tackle the job.

The Maine event...

Greetings Hosta Gardeners,

The Maine Hosta Society recently held one of our favorite activities, our annual hosta auction day. This event is open to the public as well as to members. We host two activities on auction day, a silent auction in the morning and a live auction in the afternoon. Typically, MHS members donate hostas for the silent auction, and we purchase the live auction hostas from nurseries.

This year things were a bit different. One of our beloved founding members, Ted White, passed away in January. Ted had a large hosta garden and his family allowed us to dig hostas from his garden early in the spring, as they prepared his house for sale. We came away with nearly 100 hostas, including classic varieties which are no longer available, as well as many recent hybrids. This was a treasured gift to our society, as well as a great way to carry on Ted's legacy.

you don't like them, it's a simple decision.

We used to dead-head routinely when we exhibited into the autumn as it could extend the period of lush looking growth for up to another month naturally.

Another reason to dead-head, especially after flowering, is to lessen the risk of dead flowers sticking to the plant's leaves and marking them. Dead hosta flowers look a mess and it's amazing just how rejuvenated a hosta bed can look when the flowers are removed before this has a chance of happening.

H. 'Phyllis Campbell' was divided a few weeks ago. Her leaves had been largely stripped of chlorophyll due to exposure to direct sun so there was little value in retaining them.

The photo below shows new growth against the last one we had on the bench:



Solar lanterns

In last month's newsletter email I used a shot of my garden showing a couple of solar lanterns. My hubby bought



Ted's hostas joined our member-donated hostas and others purchased at the AHS convention. In all, we sold 40-to-50 hostas in the silent auction and more than 100 hostas in the live auction. We had a substantial crowd with much enthusiasm and some hearty bidding! It was a day of happy camaraderie, a lot of fun, and good proceeds to support our ongoing activities.



One such activity is our fall meeting, where we host a public presentation from a nationally-known hosta specialist. (If Mel comes to the U.S., we'd love to invite her to present.)

I'm attaching some photos of our delightful day.

Best wishes to all,

Lenore

That's an invitation I would love to take up. Thank you Lenore.

The [British Hosta and Hemerocallis Society](#) also holds auctions and events across the season. Why not visit the website to find out more, and perhaps even join the society?

Speak soon,

Team Mickfield Hostas

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them for me from a company called [Light Innovation](#), who exhibit at flower shows across the UK. They look lovely during the day but even more beautiful at dusk:



Nursery Open by Appointment

Our open weekends are now over for the season BUT we are still open until the end of September by appointment – [see website](#) for more details.