

December 2021



Reflections on the 2021 season

This month we briefly review our year, highlighting trends we have seen and experiences we have shared. Lenore also shares her reflections on the year, which has been very busy for her too.



The 2021 season

This past year has seen continued disruption from Covid19, which was at times difficult to navigate for businesses large and small. However 2021 was another good year for Mickfield Hostas and we would like to thank all our customers for their new, and continued, support.

Our mail order continued to be excellent and, as restrictions eased, we expected to replace some of the mail order with nursery sales. This was indeed the case and it was great to be able to open the nursery from the start of the season.

The appetite for plant buying hadn't diminished from 2020 and there was even more enthusiasm at the plant fairs, when they were able to be held from May onwards. It was really good to be able to get back to giving talks once again and the calendar for 2022 is already looking very busy for talks and plant fairs.

2021 trends

This past year we have seen a number of quite defined gardening trends, which we thought we would share with you:

Jungle-effect gardening: where gardeners attempt to create a tropical effect at home.



Nursery update

Work continues on clearing the north field. David and Alan have been cutting down the poplars and I have been helping clearing and stacking the wood. The log pile is about as high as we want it, so will start another alongside it once we have another lot of chippings to use as a base.

These chippings will come from the large poplar in the centre of the nursery, when Adam can return with his team to take it down. This is a job beyond our skills. It is a huge tree, which will need to be taken down from the top, in sections.

I have also been digging the west

This form of gardening tends to work really well in urban spaces, which are less prone to extremes of weather. In particular frosts are less of a problem where the proximity of buildings generates a higher ambient temperature. This allows gardeners to grow more exotic plants.

Hostas have a big role to play in these schemes and we have seen a lot of interest in plain-leaved cultivars, which work very well to continue a lush foliage under-story to taller plantings. Cultivars such as [H. 'Devon Green'](#) and [H. 'Jurassic Park'](#), have been very popular, as have other rich green varieties. We have also had a lot of interest in plain-leaved cultivars which display different textures and architectural characteristics such as [H. 'Big Daddy'](#) for its texture and colour, [H. 'Ruffed Up'](#) for its vibrant colour, texture and rippled margins and [H. 'Sum and Substance'](#) continues to be really popular for the size of leaf, colour and sheen.

Creating secluded spaces

The restrictions we have all experienced as a result of the pandemic have led many to want to create spaces where they can hide from the world. The desire to be able to lose yourself in your outdoor space is captivating and this may be a trend that continues to motivate people into gardening, who might not have thought about the importance of their private outdoor spaces before.

As ever, there is a hosta for every situation and we have found a lot of customers looking for cultivars that offer them a new perspective on the spaces they are planting. Large-leaved cultivars and smaller varieties with larger leaves have been popular as have those with coloured stems. [H. 'Purple Boots'](#) combines large matt green leaves and purple stems in a smaller plant and has been popular from the nursery.

Gardens as the new social space: where social activities extend from the home into the garden.

The fantastic weather of 2020 encouraged more people to look at developing cooking spaces within their gardens. Every form of outside cooking, from fire pits to elaborate full kitchens have found their way into the garden and contemporary design now reflects this trend.

The interest in herb and vegetable growing has also come to the fore during the pandemic and we have sold quite a

boundary behind the collection and stock tunnels.



This area was overrun with bramble, nettle and ivy over the years. The tree stumps mean it is difficult to get any mechanical help to do this and all that does is chop up the weed rather than remove the root systems. The ground conditions have been perfect to get the roots out and it has been very satisfying chasing them out through the soil. If the number of worms in a square foot of soil indicate the condition, then it is in great shape.

We hope to start the planting and fencing of this section very soon.



Roy has been working on the stripping back of the sales tunnel for re-covering. He first had to move all the trees he had secured to the side of the tunnel so he could gain access to do the job - you can see them all lined up alongside the packing shed in the photo above.

few *lancifolia* types which you can grow to be eaten in salads. We have also been asked numerous times for hosta seed so people can add hostas to their vegetable patches.

Plants as artwork: what better to decorate your new social garden spaces than with full-on statement plants? With the wealth of fabulously showy hostas available now, and keep appearing on the scene, there is always 'bling' available for this purpose. In particular [H. 'Forbidden Fruit'](#) and [H. 'Orange Marmalade'](#) continue to be very popular - see the side column, opposite.

Architectural cultivars and those with elaborate, tall flower scapes have proven popular as accent plants for containers. Hanging baskets have also been increasingly popular, which is something we have been championing for a number of years. Going vertical with planting helps create a more lush, secluded space and hanging baskets are a great way to do this, especially under pergolas and decorating walls, fences and sheds.

Houseplants

The need for green spaces in our lives came to the fore during the lock-downs and gardening came to the rescue for many. Houseplants became extremely popular for those lacking external space to grow plants. As a result, we have been asked on numerous occasions whether hostas can be grown indoors.

Whilst hostas can theoretically be grown indoors, they do need the full spectrum of light in order to flourish, so would probably not do well long-term. They also do much better experiencing seasonal change, including cold winters, which is not something you would choose to replicate in a home environment. For those reasons we haven't recommended hostas to be grown as houseplants. However, if any of you have tried this successfully, I would welcome hearing your experiences.

Media still drives sales quite effectively

Once again purchases have varied widely across the range of hostas, with occasional spikes of interest for specific varieties touted in the media, whether through print, broadcast or online. If a TV presenter mentions a plant it still seems to be a green light for many to seek it out, regardless of whether the facts around it are correct. For

He has been replacing damaged hoops and re-shaping some that have taken the brunt of the westerly winds. Having net covers should help prevent the hoops from damage in the future. We hope to get the new cover on this month.



Hosta 'Orange Marmalade'

This cultivar, which comes from Robin's all-time favourite, [H. 'Paul's Glory'](#), remains a very popular cultivar for the vibrancy of its colour, especially in the spring. The parent plant develops its colour into the summer whereas the sport loses it, gradually turning much creamier in the centre.



Hosta 'Forbidden Fruit'

This cultivar is a wider margined sport of [H. 'Orange Marmalade'](#). It is very similar to [H. 'Paul's Glory'](#) but has a much flatter leaf with less texture as it matures. It keeps its colour very well and tends to be vibrant throughout the season - the best of both worlds if you are after a real show-off for your garden.

Hosta 'Jurassic Park'

This is indeed a great plant BUT unless you contain it in a pot it

example we have sold a lot of [H. 'Feather Boa'](#) this year as it was mentioned in TV coverage, of Hampton Court Flower Show 2021, as a new variety. We have had this variety in our collection since 1987 and have been selling it for over 30 years! However, it is still a great little plant and flowers prolifically.

During the summer Monty Don was seen on Gardeners' World carrying a pot full of [H. 'Jurassic Park'](#) (photo opposite) and extolling its virtues. This saw another spike in interest and we sold lots of this cultivar without having to market it ourselves.

Beyond the UK

Lenore's piece this month looks at some of the trends in the US, and shares some of the challenges she has faced in 2021:



Greetings Gardeners,

It's been an interesting year in our Maine garden. I'd like to tell you about some of our successes, a major challenge, and a lesson learned.

Our biggest success was seeing our hostas return in the spring looking bigger and healthier than ever! Many of our large and giant hostas have reached maturity and beautifully dominate the landscape, while the smaller ones have grown into impressive clumps and are making a statement.

We prepared a new hosta bed in the spring, approximately 280 square feet, in a shady area formerly hosting sensitive ferns. We purchased more than 40 new hostas this year, all from reputable nurseries here in the U.S. Most are planted in the new bed, and I found spaces for the others in existing beds. All are healthy and adapting well to their

will need a considerable area to spread in. Growing it in a container will mean regular division to keep the plant healthy. Pop it in the ground and you can fill quite an area.



An important consideration when selecting plants is to try to get an appreciation of exactly how large they can grow to. We have had quite a few customers say

how [Hosta 'Empress Wu'](#) has grown too large for their gardens.

As a relatively new cultivar it hasn't been around long enough to fully appreciate its mature size in UK gardens and, as a sales plant, it is often smaller than other 'giants' of the same age.

Hostas grow at different rates and this particular cultivar can sometimes take a year or two to really get going.

If you find your plants need extra space then don't be afraid to move them. I do this all the time and never worry as hostas are so resilient, especially if you take the opportunity to give them a root wash during the move. This year Lenore had to move quite a lot of her plants, as she describes in her piece opposite.

Large leaves

When Lenore sent me her piece for the newsletter she included an adorable photo of baby Kaia, leaning on a boulder beside [Hosta 'Gentle Giant'](#):

new home. Several of the purchases were giant hostas, and in general most were of solid color, particularly blues, blue-greens, and yellows, as well as some greens with beautifully textured leaves. There is a trend here toward streaked hostas, and I included only two of those in my purchases.

Our biggest challenge this year was making way for a natural gas pipe which ran 50 feet through our side garden, and a new generator installed in our back garden. The two-foot deep trench for the gas pipe ran through several established hosta beds. We (i.e., Tom) chose to dig by hand rather than allow the gas company's large equipment into the garden. The job took more than two months with digging, moving loads of dirt, filling back in, and dealing with a multitude of retrieved rocks and muddy paths. I dug up, temporarily potted, replanted and relocated many mature hostas. I also cleared an entire side bed for the generator installation (see photo above). The approved site was later changed, and we scrambled this fall to relocate an entire back bed to make way for the new generator, hastily moving eight hostas and several other shade perennials. Unfortunately we neglected other garden tasks, such as being consistent with deer-proofing, while dealing with the ongoing crisis. That is a story for another time.

The lesson learned this year is that, despite well-planned gardens, change happens. Plants, and indeed entire gardens, can be moved and re-established if done with care, and redesigning a bed can be an opportunity as well as a challenge. Our hostas will survive, and so will we. Once more we are reminded that hostas are incredibly resilient and generally amazing plants.

Best to all,
Lenore

This leads us nicely into the subject of garden design, which we plan to devote our first couple of 2022 newsletters to.

Until then...

Season's Greetings from Team Mickfield Hostas.



This is a great photo showing just how large hosta leaves can get, and they can get much larger on some varieties.



Fuller's Mill

Congratulations to the team at [Fuller's Mill Garden](#) in Suffolk for being selected as the regional winner in the RHS Partner Garden of the Year, as voted by RHS members.

Visitors said:

"It has a deep peace about it, and it's a plant persons garden."

"A beautiful place for all the family to enjoy. An absolute credit to gardening charity [Perennial!](#)"

"It is a woodland delight. It is a place of enchantment and reflection."

We hope to be guest nursery again in 2022 and will let you know dates when confirmed.