



Vase-shaped hostas

I love hearing from you and Hilary Hine has contacted me to suggest I look at vase-shaped hostas, so this month here is selection of great growers, which are vase-shaped in habit.

I'm going to kick off with [*H. 'Deane's Dream'*](#) and here she is in our display at Gardener's World back in 2013, standing proud among her companions. This cultivar is so pretty with her glaucous blue leaves on pink stems, which are clearly visible due to the vase-shaped habit. A medium-sized plant with arrow-shaped leaves extending to 9" by 5" wide. The leaf tips can scorch so a sheltered position is best and this will help retain the leaf bloom so your plant should still be obviously blue into the autumn.



The role of these great growers

Vase-shaped, or 'upright' hosta cultivars are not as common as the more cascading forms, but they are great for creating architectural shapes and structure, not just when grown in pots.

One of the most important things you need to consider, when growing these more upright varieties, is shelter from strong winds, which can weaken the petioles, and occasionally snap them. The wind can also dehydrate the plant, and its surroundings, so access to moisture is important. Drooping petioles is a real problem, especially when exhibiting. We always needed to support these varieties in transit, if we chose to display them at flower shows. The amount of movement they were subjected to when being moved on trolleys, and in a lorry, was equivalent to windy conditions. They also had a tendency to dry out in transit so planning a watering regime to counteract this problem was important for my stress levels.

It will not come as a surprise that the most dramatic of the vase-shaped hostas fall into the giant category as their height adds to the effect.

A classic upright

[*Hosta 'Krossa Regal'*](#) is a variety

I have often recommended to customers for a variety of reasons. It is a great grower and so elegant holding its leaves curving upwards at the end of long petioles.

Hosta 'Krossa Regal' is a hybrid of [*H. nigrescens*](#) (main section), which is obvious not just in the upright habit but in the way the leaves are held tilting upwards.

The colour also has great impact, looking almost turquoise in some lights. Indeed, it can look so intensely blue it is hard to capture in a

When thinking about hostas with a more upright habit my mind goes straight to the species [*H. nigrescens*](#).



This giant species has great architectural impact due in part to being around 30" tall, but mainly because it carries its leaves high, accentuating the vase-shape habit. The blue-green leaves are stunningly cupped with prominent veins.

Perhaps the best known sport of *H. nigrescens* is *H. 'Krossa Regal'*, which I talk about in the side column, opposite.

Hosta 'Praying Hands'

Perhaps the ultimate vase-shaped hosta is [*H. 'Praying Hands'*](#). I call it the 'Marmite' hosta as people either love it or loath it but I am firmly in the former camp as it is such a versatile plant. It looks equally as good standing alone or in company:



Hosta 'Praying Hands' is listed as having unknown parentage but among the first batch we bought there was a sport which had many of the characteristics of [*H. 'Fortunei Hyacinthina'*](#), and to which we gave the holding name of [*H. 'Eastern Spires'*](#). There are differing schools of thought on sporting and reversion but, because early batches of *H.*

photo looking natural but the best effect is when it is planted with contrasting foliage, such as in the photo below alongside leaves of [*H. 'Sum and Substance'*](#):



Its upright habit makes it a great option to grow at the back of a border, or underplanted as in the photo below at Hyde Hall in 2019:



[*H. 'Ginsu Knife'*](#) is the hosta underneath, which has amazing white, fragrant flowers.

There are quite a few noteworthy sports of *H. 'Krossa Regal'* but the following two are among the best growers. [*Hosta 'Regal Splendor'*](#), is a variegated sport with creamy yellow margins, a lovely contrast to the glaucous green-blue, so if you are looking for a hosta with more impact.

Perhaps at the back of a shady border, this could be ideal. Lenore grows this sport very successfully in her garden in

'Praying Hands' proved quite unstable, with the leaves opening out rather than staying furled, we are more inclined to think that it has Fortunei parentage.

In any event, I have often used it to illustrate how you can grow hostas together in the same pot. It is particularly lovely when underplanted with a miniature variety called [H. 'Slim and Trim'](#) but there are so many different ways to grow this very unusual hosta – why not try it yourself.

Hosta 'Liberty'

Among the early arrivals every year is this stunning giant, which has arguably the strongest petioles in the hosta world. They are gloriously thick and support the large, vibrant leaves right through the season.



The bright golden yellow margins of [H. 'Liberty'](#) will fade to creamy white by autumn but they are still stunning. At around 40" tall the upright habit allows this cultivar to sit above other planting. With a 40" spread, it needs to be in a very large pot and will have a tendency to develop new growth pushing out against the sides of whatever container you grow it in. It's an oddity that we have found it grows more evenly in open ground where space is plentiful.

Hosta 'Liberty' is a sport of [H. 'Sagae'](#), which has a long list of progeny including many with very similar markings. Indeed you can stand in Tunnel 3 at the nursery and see many of these sports, especially in the spring when the margin colours are so vibrant. In our experience *H. 'Liberty'* is the best grower of them all, especially if you are after a more pronounced upright habit. I have used this cultivar so many times in displays, at all times of the season. It's a proper show-off but so amenable to being hauled around the UK, often withstanding quite extreme environments we had to exhibit in.

Hosta 'Yellow River'

Another great grower, with stand-out vase-shaped credentials, is [H. 'Yellow River'](#). This cultivar has also travelled extensively to shows across the years but it does need space around it to show off its upright habit as the lower leaves droop. The photo below was taken at Gardeners' World in 2010 and it looks beautiful isolated as a specimen in a pot. It is less suitable for underplanting unless you are doing so with a ground cover foil plant. The concept of the foliage of *H. 'Yellow River'* exploding out of it is an idea I haven't tried yet!

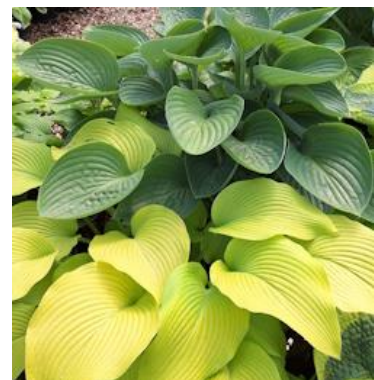
Maine and agrees it deserves to be included as a great grower.

[Hosta 'Regalia'](#), my favourite sport of *H. 'Krossa Regal'*, which has broad blue margins surrounding light green centres – terrifically subtle colouring.

The wavy leaf margins accentuate the elegance of the way in which they layer high above their petioles. I have included a photo at the end of the newsletter, which shows the colouring reasonably well. It is a cultivar that is hard to get hold of but we may have a handful of divisions this year, with a high price tag.

Hosta 'Tenryu'

This cultivar is worth a mention as it looks so similar to *H. nigrescens*. However, parentage has not been attributed to the species. Some comment on its size exceeding the species but, in our experience, it doesn't get quite as tall, and the leaves do lose their bloom earlier in the season making them look darker on top. It is a great grower and looks fabulous below, alongside [H. 'Sun Power'](#) in the Collection tunnel:



Hosta rectifolia

Another species that has given rise to vase-shaped offspring is *H. rectifolia*. Tachi Giboshi is the Japanese name for *rectifolia*,



Just to wrap up, the photo below shows *H.* 'Yellow River' just behind *H.* 'Regalia', (which is mentioned in the side column) and is a stunner for its beautifully subtle colouring and wavy leaf margins. As you can see, both varieties are standing tall among their peers in the Collection:



I hope this has whetted your appetite for some of the more structural varieties. They certainly add impact to a garden scheme and illustrate how versatile hostas can be – thank you for the suggestion Hilary.

Speak soon,

Team Mickfield Hostas

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which translates as the erect, or upright stately, hosta.

This species been used widely to breed vase-shaped upright hostas, often with incredibly tall flower scapes. We have a number of sports at the nursery, which attract a lot of attention, especially when they produce their incredible flowers.

Hosta 'Kinbuchi Tachi' is a particular favourite, and *H.* 'Silver Star', Is very similar. The leaves are carried upright on long petioles so they poke through surrounding plantings:



I had to stand the plant on the ground to photograph it.