



MICKFIELD HOSTAS



Hosta 'Neptune': celebrating shape and form of specimen cultivars

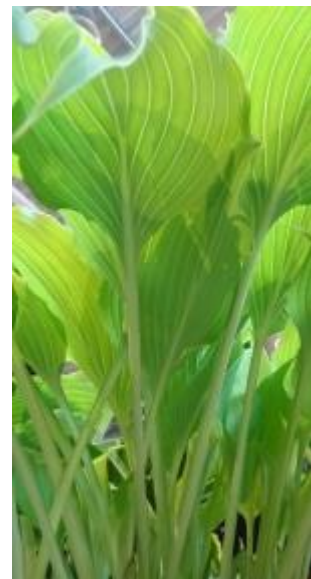
A new year: a fresh perspective?

As a regular attendee of flower shows, this is the time of year when my thoughts turn to planning displays and how I can use my plants to tempt you to try them.

Plants are not always willing participants in this endeavour as nature will have her way and they can have temporary strops if conditions are not quite to their liking. It is quite usual for me to plan a season focusing on a specific branch of the genus only to have the weather, or the location of my display, disrupt plans. A good example of this was last spring. For the first time in years the early warmth encouraged lots of fabulous leaf in time for the [Harrogate Spring Flower Show](#). The 'blue' leaved cultivars were looking exceptionally good but the lighting above my stand in the new Floral Pavilion turned all the blues to a shade of green. I couldn't open the fire door to allow them to show off, so it was all quite disappointing.

However, the lighting did produce a rather interesting effect when you viewed the plants from below. Because the display was elevated from the floor, I was able to swat down and take photos from below – the results were really quite different (see the image of *H. 'Neptune'* taken at the show) and started me thinking about how important a little lateral thinking can be and how we can all use a fresh perspective.

This coming spring my display at Harrogate will be in the main entrance to the Plant Pavilion (stand PP3), where the light will be fabulous – what's the betting we get a cold spring and the leaves won't unfurl in time to take advantage of the position. With that thought in mind I need to come up with something that will have



Hosta 'Neptune'

The feature plant this month is [Hosta 'Neptune'](#), which many of you may have seen pictures of over the past 5-6 years in my newsletters. This is because time and again it gives so much, either as a border plant but more especially in a container, where its characteristics routinely attract attention.

It grows quickly, reaching mature dimensions in 3-4 years. It divides reliably and so could create quite an impact planted in a broad sweep, if space permits.

impact and encourage visitors to stop and look. I have a few ideas up my sleeve and hope to be able to celebrate our 25th anniversary of exhibiting at the event which was the very first flower show my parents, Yvonne and Robin attended back in 1993.

How to create that fresh perspective

As gardeners we are always thinking of ways to enhance our own spaces and make the plants we have bought give us the maximum impact and pleasure.

With this in mind, why not reconsider where a plant is not working to best advantage and move it. *Hosta* relocate brilliantly – they have to in my garden as I'm a novice with some many other genera and often cannot envisage how another plant may develop and upset the original planting effect desired.

If you haven't yet tried *Hosta* in your garden, then have a think about what you would like to achieve and how a well-chosen plant can create a new look. Whether you are endowed with acres of space or just have a small courtyard, there is a *Hosta* suitable for use and they have a long season - if you are looking for ideas you could start by visiting our Inspiration pages on the website. If you know what colours you need to lift a space or create a 'wow' feature then take a look at our [Search page](#) to narrow down the hunt.

If you already grow *Hosta*, and they are sufficiently mature to divide, try a chunk in another part of the garden, replant nearby to begin a sweep of planting or pop in a container to create a new focal point. Experience has taught us that dividing *Hosta* in the green produces the best results, between May to September for optimal growth and least likelihood of the plants taking a check. Roy and I plan to create a video of how we divide mature plants at some point during the season and there will be an article on how we divide *Hosta* in the 40th anniversary edition of the [Plant Heritage Journal](#), due for publication in the spring.

More information can be found on our website, which will be undergoing the usual updates in advance of the 2018 season.

Happy New year to you all and thank you for your continued support.

Team Mickfield Hostas

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The leaves of *H. 'Neptune'* curve upwards from the midrib, which shows off the rippled margins beautifully. The leaves emerge upright from the crown and elegantly curve downwards and then under at the tip. The form of the plant is best shown elevated so the leaves can develop and exhibit these characteristics to maximum effect.

As the season progresses, the leaf colour 'bleeds' from a smoothly glaucous matt green to reveal a water-colour effect as if the colour is draining from the cells. It is a very subtle change and coincides with the production of lavender flowers on very long, arching scapes. The flowers exaggerate the form of the plant, so survive my scateurs - not many *Hosta* flowers please me enough to do that. The lavender flowers are quite delicate and are the perfect contrast to the leaf colour – delightful.

Scorching is a rare thing for *H. 'Neptune'*, which means it can cope in brighter conditions but if you prefer the leaves to remain bluer, then give it more shade. Even in deep shade, *H. 'Neptune'* is quite a bright plant, being a pale blue-green rather than a true blue.

If you are after more of a blue leaf to a similar plant you could try [H. 'Blue Cascade'](#) or a much larger leaved cultivar, [H. 'Cutting Edge'](#), both of which have a similar habit.