



A new year: a new hosta?

Those of you who have been subscribing for a number of years will recognise this theme. We believe that the 'new' should be tried and tested before launching onto the market.

Unfortunately, this seldom happens due to market pressures:

- The public clamour for the latest 'must have' cultivar
- The pressure on growers and exhibitors to offer something not seen before
- Breeders desire to lead the way in the latest gardening trend

Unfortunately the hype can herald an over-priced, unproven, but hugely attractive cultivar, which goes on to be less than garden worthy. We made the decision a few years back to only feature 'new' cultivars if we have been satisfied with the growth and characteristics of the parent plants we previously added to our collection. Therefore, we don't feel we can call them 'new' and we don't try to promote them as such and suggest you look beyond the hype and make your own judgement. An excellent example of this is the 'mouse' series, so many of which look identical and cannot be widely relied upon to retain their initial characteristics.

This year is a continuation of the theme so our budget has been spent replenishing those cultivars we have confidence in, through root division at the nursery and from trusted suppliers.

We are excited to be able to offer the following re-introduced varieties, among others:

[H. 'Big Daddy'](#), [H. 'Brenda's Beauty'](#), [H. 'Catherine'](#),
[H. 'Empress Wu'](#), [H. 'Liberty'](#) (below), [H. 'Patriot'](#),
[H. 'Remember Me'](#), [H. 'Silver Shadows'](#) and



**Animal &
Plant Health
Agency**

Plant Passports Strengthening biosecurity controls across the EU

In October 2016, the EU adopted Plant Health Regulation (EU) 2016/2031, which will apply from 14 December 2019 to all EU member states, including the UK. As this regulation entered into force in 2016 it was carried over into UK legislation under the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

Unfortunately, the guidelines for whether we do indeed need to issue plant passports for *Hosta* are ambiguous. *Hosta* are not considered plants at risk of being hosts to pests and diseases on the current list of harmful organisms ([quite an interesting read](#)).

However, as we sell 'plants for planting' it appears we do need to be registered.

Again, rather oddly, this regulation covers the sale of plants through mail order but not to plants we sell at a

[H. 'Volcano Island'](#).



Old versus new

Of course we do not want to discourage anyone from buying a new hosta, just do a bit of ground work and ask the people selling it what they know about its origins and performance.

One of the reasons we list the parentage of cultivars on our website is to encourage you to look into a plant's heritage in order to make a more informed purchasing decision.

We find it very interesting to know where a plant originates as it can often indicate characteristics we admire in a plant.

Next month we will delve into the species [H. pycnophylla](#) and highlight why we are keen to add the offspring of this species to our collection.

Pricing

Once again we have kept prices fairly static for the forthcoming season, which is effectively a price decrease. Pricing is a thorny issue because we compete with retailers unaware of the true value of the plants they sell. Before a plant gets anywhere near the pot, you need to supply the pot, soil and label and then make an assessment of the costs of nurturing that plant to a saleable condition. Add to that the invisible costs of running a business and compliance with so many directives it can make your head spin - see the side column for the latest set of rules to be enforced. This is why our base price starts at £5. Our ceiling price is variable depending upon the maturity of the plant being sold and its availability. Newer varieties carry a premium for the first year or two to cover the costs of introducing them. Divisions directly from our mature National Collection plants, start at £20 and go up according to how rare they are.

We feel Hosta should be treated more like a shrub or tree, an investment that will add value to any garden over time.

Website updates for 2020

We have just updated our website with the [2020 Availability list](#) and updated the [Search page](#) accordingly. As ever, we

flower show or plant fair. Considering they are one and the same plants, this distinction is baffling. However, to avoid any potential issues, we are now registered to issue plant passports for mail order consignments of Hosta. At the moment it appears that we should be able to comply with the specifics of the plant passport by adding the required details to our invoices. We feel this would be a better way to ensure traceability than relying on easy to lose labels, which already include our contact details for traceability



Thank you
For all your kind thoughts
and wishes regarding Robin

It has been wonderful to read some of the stories and memories you have shared since we shared our sad news last month. If you have any particular memories yet to share, do get in touch as we are putting together an album to celebrate his life, which will be available to view at the nursery.

have only listed plants of sufficient quantity to avoid the need to constantly update the site during the busy season. Limited quantity cultivars have been highlighted, but do be quick if your chosen plant is among these as numbers are indeed limited and we sold out of quite a lot of limited availability plants quickly last year.

Wish List

Once again, if there is a specific variety you would like, and it isn't listed as available, do get in touch and we can pop your request on our waiting list for when we divide the parent plants.

That's all for now but we would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year at the start of a new gardening decade - who knows what the future may bring...

Team Mickfield Hostas



H. 'Remember Me'

In the latter stages of Robin's dementia, he was still recognising his plants and this little lovely always caught his eye, it's quite fitting we are able to have it for sale again this coming season.