



Phew - welcome to summer!

As we career from one show to another, the days are getting stickier and the marquees more sweltering.

This month we look forward to Hampton Court Flower Show and our first proper exhibit for Plant Heritage...

Plant Heritage at Hampton Court

This year we will be exhibiting in the Plant Heritage Marquee (one half of the Rose Marquee) near to the Thames entrance of the show ground, for the first time.

We will be creating an exhibit that features the species *h. sieboldiana*, and looks at how *h. 'Elegans'* has become incorrectly known as the western form of the species. We touched upon one branch of the *h. sieboldiana* family tree in our newsletters last year, when we traced the origins of *h. 'Dorothy Benedict'*. This time we look at how direct descendents of *h. sieboldiana* compare with direct descendents of *h. 'Elegans'*. We then introduce another species, *h. tardiflora* and show how it was used in the development of the Tardiana Group, when bred with *h. 'Elegans'*. Ultimately the story includes *h. 'June'*, arguably the most popular hosta cultivar of modern times.

The *h. sieboldiana* family tree consists of many cultivars but, as ever, we focus on the varieties we hold in our National Collection to illustrate how characteristics have been enhanced in subsequent generations. Most hosta species are unremarkable to behold but they all have traits that can be enhanced through selective breeding.

Indeed many traits are enhanced naturally through mutations, or sports.

Occasionally cultivars can look, to all intents and purposes, the same. For example:

h. 'Olive Bailey Langdon' and *h. 'Frances Williams'*

These two cultivars are sports of *h. sieboldiana* and *h. 'Elegans'* respectively.



H. 'Frances Williams'

Both look very similar but they each have distinctive growth and seasonal characteristics. *H. 'Olive Bailey Langdon'* (leaf image) seems to hold its colour so much better and the leaf margins are less subject to scorching than those of *h. 'Frances Williams'*:



Gardeners' World 2010

This year we returned to the Floral Marquee and enjoyed one of the best shows we have had at the NEC.

Alongside our marquee presence, we also exhibited in the Plant Heritage stand in Hall 6.

During quiet moments at Chelsea, Mel designed a stand layout for Gardeners' World, which involved quite a lot of hard landscaping elements. Once again, our prop-meister, Roy, triumphed with a fabulous elliptical deck, complete with splash rings. It looked brilliant and was very popular with visitors.

Click on the images to see larger photographs:



H. 'Yellow River'

Conservation through cultivation is key to keeping species and cultivars, and the knowledge about them, alive and relevant. The genus hosta is fascinating but

complex. There is more debate and conjecture about nomenclature and botanical origins than there is actual agreed fact. All we can do is keep an open mind and continue learning, and pass on the knowledge we gain. Involvement with Plant Heritage helps us do just that.

The species *h. sieboldiana*: a brief history

H. sieboldiana was named after one of the most important people involved in bringing hostas into Europe in the 19th Century, Philipp Franz Balthasar Von Siebold. He had a very interesting career and achieved many things. Greatly revered for his medical and horticultural achievements, he did much to foster medical and botanical connections between Europe and Japan. Prior to Siebold's introductions there were only two recorded species of hosta in Europe, *h. plantaginea* and *h. ventricosa*, which were introduced in the latter years of the 18th Century.



Siebold was a prolific collector of plants and trees and *h. sieboldiana* was just one of the species of plant he brought to Europe from Japan. The hostas he amassed formed only part of his plant collection. However, despite his meticulous writings and cataloguing, Siebold did not provide botanical descriptions of his hostas. Subsequently there remains some confusion over the correct nomenclature and form of the hostas he collected. It is very interesting to read George Schmid's historical account of the Genus *Hosta* to understand some of this confusion. Schmid has done much to bring some order to the subject.

We will also be exhibiting in Plant Plot number A8, immediately outside the entrance to the Plant Heritage Marquee. This year we will be bringing lots of fabulous varieties for sale, so hope to see you at the show.

Don't forget we will also be at **Tatton Park Show**, in the Plant Heritage Marquee.

Hyde Hall's Celebration of Plants

August 13-15 2010 sees the first **3-day plant fair** at the RHS garden in Essex.

We will be there, so why don't you make a date and come along too...

Next month: We look at the 'Tiara' series of hosta cultivars...

The advice and opinions contained within this monthly newsletter have been formed over more than 30 years of experience with the *Hosta* genus. We are constantly learning and refining that knowledge and would welcome any suggestions that readers of this newsletter would like to make so please [contact us](#).



The elliptical deck



H. 'Snow Crust'



Under the beech tree



H. 'El Capitan'



Miniatures in pots

... and the white card was a Silver Gilt award!