



Spring shows and fairs

It's all go here in Mickfield, as the season is now in full swing.

Our spring shows have been very entertaining, but not always for the right reasons, find out more...

It has been an eventful spring

We literally hit the ground running this year, as the improvement in the weather bought gardeners outside early, and orders began coming in.

It has been so encouraging, after two years of temperamental weather and continuing economic woes, to have so many of you getting in touch, and coming out to the nursery and shows.

This year we are continuing to support local shows, to help spread the word that the nursery is open every day until the end of September. So far we have attended three plant fairs, two agricultural shows, one flower show and one festival, all in less than seven weeks!

We kicked the season off at the **Redgrave Fen Plant Fair**. This was the first time we have managed to attend because it is usually too early for our plants to be showing themselves. However, the plants were well advanced this year and we enjoyed a relaxing time at the Fair with other local nurseries, catching up for the first time since winter. It was good to get out and about before our first major show of the year, **Harrogate Spring Flower Show**.

Once again the show was a delight. We detected the first signs of a renewed enthusiasm for gardening among the visitors.

The weather makes all the difference and it was so much warmer than the previous spring when we had to produce an educational display for our 'asparagus' shoots.

This year we had ample foliage and the spring colours were terrific, helping us secure a Premier Gold for our display - see photo opposite:



Just before heading off to Malvern, we squeezed in another local event, the Plant Fair at **Woottens of Wenham**. This is a lovely bijou event held at Woottens nursery near the Suffolk coast. It was well attended by local nurseries and artisans in metal, wood and wicker - an eclectic mix, which worked well to create a unique atmosphere.

The RHS Malvern Spring Festival promised a reorganisation of the traditional flower show into a 'festival', which featured all sorts of elements, from classic cars to cows! The jury is out on whether this was an improvement, show visitors we spoke to were a little confused about the apparent move away from the horticultural

Nursery update

With Mel and Roy away at shows, Robin and Yvonne have been holding the fort at the nursery, welcoming lots of visitors.



This aspect of our business has blossomed since we took the decision to scale down our show commitments, and open the nursery full time during the season.

Doing more local shows and plant fairs has helped raise our profile - so many people were unaware of our existence, despite being 'on the scene' for many years. Most of our visitors were coming from other parts of the country, having seen us at major shows. It is really good to be getting more local visitors this year, as well.

By attending local events we have been able to find out more about other nurseries and gardens in Suffolk. We now need to update our 'Visit Us' page with lots more ideas of places you can visit. This area of the website has helped lots of visitors travelling to see us from further afield, who are looking for ideas.

aspect of things. This wasn't helped by the relocation of the Floral Marquee, and the loss of the signage during the high winds experienced at the start of the show. Our stand, OS990, was located in between the two 'wings' of the Floral Marquee. On the first day of the show we were judged to have the Best Plant Village/Pavillion exhibit. It was a tremendous surprise to receive the award, and an engraved Dartington Glass bowl for the combination of our display and sales area. The judges really liked the way we had laid out our space, and screened our sales plants from the worse of the Malvern weather. It was good to be able to re-use Roy's fabulous screens, which he made for the Hampton Court Flower Show in 2012, we hope to use them again at Hyde Hall. At least the screens did attract a few people away from the main avenue, to investigate.

The award proved rather ironic as the show unfolded and our stand became the only one remaining in the area. Unfortunately, the weather prevented the opening of the Floral Marquee panels, and the Potting Shed feature was moved into the Marquee. Due to the subsequent lack of footfall our three neighbours took the opportunity to move their pitches to uncovered spots alongside the trackway into the Marquee. We couldn't risk damaging our precious stock and were offered an alternative, covered space, sandwiched between the aforementioned classic cars and cows, on the opposite side of the showground. This offer was made on the evening of the second day but it was impractical, at that late stage, to move anywhere as our display took two days to set up.

Fortunately, regular readers of our newsletter, and visitors to the show, knew we were there and were prepared to persist in tracking us down. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for doing so, and helping ensure our show wasn't a complete disaster. It was a real shame that the original plans for the area didn't work out because it had the potential to be good, but perhaps more suited to a July or August event.

The week after Malvern, we attended the **Hadleigh Show** for the first time. The show has been in existence for 175 years and, judging by the folks we met, it will be going for many more years. Our stand was alongside one of the two Rings, which had equestrian classes and activities all day. We hope to make this a regular event in our calendar.

Bank Holiday weekend saw us at the **Plant Fair at Helmingham Hall** just down the road from the nursery. We were situated with other National Collection holders, by the Plant Heritage Marquee in front of the Hall.

Finally, we attended the **Suffolk Show** last week amid threats of appalling weather, which thankfully didn't materialise.



Thursday's visitors welcomed Prince Harry to the showground and we enjoyed some television coverage following our award of a Large Gold and the "Notcutts Salver" for the best exhibit under 37 square metres. We were not able to confirm why 37 square metres but as the award goes back to 1968, it was probably a time when fewer, larger exhibits were staged.

This year there were more Suffolk nurseries involved and the organisers are hoping to expand on this aspect in the future.

So what's next? As June starts, so do the larger shows. We are currently preparing for Gardeners' World at the NEC, where we will be located near to the Plant Creche in the **Floral Marquee**. This is always a busy show and promises to be so again this year, as it is a day shorter.

Next month: [We take a closer look at Hosta flowers...](#)

The advice and opinions contained within this monthly newsletter have been formed over more than 38 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**.

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Our Malvern stand (Click on images to view)



Where are they?

The lack of activity in our area did not attract visitors across the grass, away from the avenue. On the second day the champagne stand did not open, due to the weather. Their large umbrella was closed, effectively hiding our stand from view of show visitors walking south along the avenue - see below:

