

June 2022



Celebrating the season of the hosta

This month we are breaking with the usual format in order to wallow in the beauty of the hostas as this is their very best part of the season. The photo below is from one of our two collection tunnels:



In the US Lenore's plants are slightly less forward but the garden is full of promise as the plants emerge and start filling in their spaces:



Hello Gardeners,

I hope you are enjoying this spring season!

For hosta growers, spring is a most exciting time. We love seeing the hosta shoots pop out of the ground, watching them get bigger each day until they open their beautiful leaves. For me, seeing my hostas emerge is like welcoming old friends. I wait for them and I'm delighted to see them appear. I've learned that some hostas are slower than others to emerge (e.g., [H. 'Patriot'](#)) and I expect that they'll be a little late.

Here in zone 5 Maine, spring arrives a bit later than in the UK. As I write this in mid-May, all of our hostas have

Some of Lenore's emerging hostas up close

Click on the images to find out more about each cultivar.

Hosta 'Corn Muffins'



Hosta 'Dancing Queen'



Hosta 'Brother Stefan'



shoots above ground, many smaller and medium hostas have partially or fully opened, and the giant hostas have not yet unfurled.

The emerging of hostas each spring is a rather magical process. It's amazing that a giant hosta like [H. 'Sum and Substance'](#) is contained in those initial, tightly-wound shoots. It's also amazing to see a smaller hosta like [H. 'Fruit Punch'](#) popping out to make a blazing yellow statement in the garden. Each hosta forms a lovely, artistic pattern as it opens, and witnessing that artistry is part of the fun of growing hostas. I'm sharing here photos of some of my favorite hostas emerging - in the side column.

By the time you read this, they'll be fully open.

All the best,

Lenore



Hosta heaven

There is nothing I like more than cruising through the collection tunnels at this time of year. The colours really pop, so much so I have to take photos on a cloudy day. I cannot list all the varieties you can see, in the photo below:



The rare and unusual

Each season we take time to check out the rare cultivars we hold in our collection, primarily to see that they are

Hosta 'Half and Half'



Hosta 'Frances Williams'

Opening earlier than other giant hostas here, because she's potted, and spent the winter in the garage.



In season maintenance of our National Collection

There is so much to do in the six months of the season, when we can work on the plants that we are always struggling to find the time to check all the plants in our National Collection.

Thankfully most cultivars are stable and happily return every year looking as they should. Some, however, do need attention to maintain their characteristics, especially those that exhibit irregular streaking. These cultivars are often highly prized for their unusual markings, which can, in turn, be used to breed new varieties. Given their temperamental nature it is good if a stable form can be bred which

performing as expected. One such unusual cultivar is [H. 'Gunther's Prize'](#), which is looking good this year:



Last year a customer asked us for a piece of this lovely cultivar, [H. 'Hakumuo'](#), which has a bright white centre in the spring and then it fades to green later on, rather like [H. 'Whirlwind'](#). It is an expensive one but a good example of how we can sometimes divide for special requests - it is always worth asking.



One variety we never have enough of is [H. 'War Paint'](#), which also has a bright leaf centre that fades to green during the season. The leaves hang down from tall petioles forming an umbrella shape - very elegant and it looks as good from below:



carries some of the parental characteristics.

One such cultivar is [H. 'Gunther's Prize'](#), which I mention in the left hand column opposite.

Other plants that need regular attention include [H. 'Dorothy Benedict'](#) and [H. 'Spilt Milk'](#).

Indeed, I have yet to capture a good photograph, of the latter cultivar for the website, without a chunk of plain leaves in it. Once this cultivar reaches maturity it can be a little more reliable, but it

can be tricky to get it there without losing the rather special markings. On the other hand we have found [H. 'Pistache'](#), a sport of [H. 'Spilt Milk'](#), to be very reliable and this might be partly due to the irregular green margins, which help stabilise the plant's ability to feed itself. Sorry to say we don't have this cultivar available at the moment but click on the image below to find out more:



How big is big?

About four years ago we planted up a [Hosta 'Wunderbar'](#) to go outside the back door. We thought it might be too windy there but the plant loves it:



Although I could be accused of tempting you with the unavailable, our wish list does allow for those of you who hanker for something unusual a fair chance of obtaining it. As time goes on some of the backbone of our collection have become less readily available, including this beauty, [H. 'Gloriosa'](#). This cultivar has upturned leaves with fine white margins almost creating a drawstring effect. I love it and it is really photogenic:



There is indeed something to recommend every variety out there. Even the plainest of cultivars can often surprise with wonderful flowers.

Now is the perfect time to immerse yourselves in their beauty and you can do this by visiting the nursery. We will be open for another six long weekends until the end of the season - [check out the dates here](#).

Have a lovely June,
Team Mickfield Hostas

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Platinum Jubilee

Finally, we couldn't end without marking the Platinum Jubilee of our Queen, and what better way to do so than with a photo of her namesake hosta.

Unfortunately, we do not have it for sale at the moment but there are several cultivars with suitable names if you were thinking of buying a plant-based souvenir of the occasion. An obvious one is [H. 'Jubilee'](#). Fingers crossed the weather turns warmer for the celebrations at the weekend to mark this rarest of events.

Hosta 'The Queen'

