

May 2022



## *Latest from the nursery*

Welcome to a shorter newsletter this month as we bring you up to date from the nursery and look forward to a busy May...



### **The net experiment**

This is the first season of our sales plants being protected by horticultural net coverings on the tunnels rather than polythene - see the photo above.

We have wanted to replace the polythene tunnel covers for a few years now but until we made the final decision to quit exhibiting at large flower shows, we felt compelled to continue using the polythene for the added protection it affords the younger plants.

So far we are delighted with the response of the plants to being in a much cooler environment. The punishing frosts we have had in East Anglia have had on a limited impact on the early foliage as the plants have had the opportunity to harden off as they emerge. Also, the leaves look so much more vibrant as they emerge, which is what we see in the parent plants.

As usual, every spring throws up a mix of conditions it can be quite problematic to counter. From mid-March we were blessed with some beautiful warm weather and the

### **A busy May ahead**

Although we are no longer attending the large flower shows, we do have a busy calendar of regional specialist plant fairs we now attend. Apologies for those among you who are not able to attend but perhaps it is worth thinking about a holiday in East Anglia to take advantage of one of these wonderful days out? If that is not possible it is always worth finding out about specialist plants fairs in your area as you can uncover some real gems...

### **Norfolk Plant Heritage Spring Plant Fair**

As this newsletter hits your inbox we will be heading into Norfolk for the Hethersett Spring Plant Fair. This is a cracking event

temperature in the tunnels was tempered by the gentle breezes, rather than building up the heat as it used to do under the polythene. In recent weeks, there has been quite a large temperature difference between day and night and overall quite a chilly easterly wind. This always pegs back any warmth we experience as we are quite open to the east. All it does is hold back unfurling but that is no bad thing when frosts are still happening.

If you do suffer any frost damage to the first leaves you can remove them and redirect the plants energy to creating new ones.

### Ground grown hostas

You may notice that your ground grown plants are slower than pot grown ones but that is simply due to the time it takes to warm up a larger expanse of soil. Mine are definitely reluctant to unfurl.

The biggest issue we are facing this spring is the continued lack of rain - we haven't had any significant rainfall for months and this is a critical time of year for many plants to get the water they need.

We are on heavy clay, which does have the benefit of holding moisture for longer but the surface is cracking deeply on higher ground so if we don't get some decent rain soon we will have to water manually.

### Wish List

One thing we are now finding time to do is to address long standing requests on our wish list. This is where customers can request to be notified when we can divide a plant, not usually available. We then contact the customer and offer a division on a first come, first served basis. Some plants in our collection may never be suitable for this as they are simply too rare/difficult to grow, or keep characteristic perhaps because of an inherent instability.

Being in a position to do this, although on a limited scale at present, is something we have been looking forward to doing for many years. It is a great way for the collection to earn its keep and to provide additional plants of very special varieties for conservation purposes.

Of course we already routinely divide plants we know can handle the division and become great garden worthy examples to sell but this is a new string to our collection bow. If there is a special plant you have hankered for why not consider joining our wish list for it, though do be

organised by Norfolk Plant Heritage. They feature a National Collection at each event and are on hand throughout the event, together with other collection holders, to provide more information. It is a great way for visitors to engage with the organisation and their activities in the region. Best of all you can get your hands on some very special plants.



### Woottens Plant and Garden Fair

Held at the Woottens Iris field, this event is a great opportunity to buy plants from many regional plant specialists at a time when the irises are blooming - how special is that?

Find out more by clicking on the image below:



### Bungay Garden Market

This is the first time we will be at this highly popular spring market. We attended the event held last

prepared to wait a while as many can be very slow growing.



### Slugs and snails

Interestingly the RHS has very recently announced they are no longer classifying slugs and snails as pests. We have long held that belief, hence our frustration at the dominance of the issue and the association of hostas with slugs and snails. Perhaps this might help temper the discussion and help us to spread the word that slugs and snails are invaluable in the garden, and that wholesale destruction of them is not advisable or warranted. We have always advocated control, hand in hand with an understanding of why and how they predate. Knowledge is power, so if you have a problem, do some research to find out how you can tackle it.

Whilst on the subject, the use of metaldehyde-based pellets has been outlawed (since March). You can still source non-metaldehyde pellets but the advice we give on their use is still highly relevant. Indeed we have found the metaldehyde alternatives are much less potent so the use of the jars is even more important - see our FAQ page for more information. Since doing some more research into slug and snail trails, we have found it just as effective to disturb those trails, even if you cannot find the culprit. I now list it as my top tip to prevent damage but you need to act as soon as you detect any damage to your hosta. Leaving it for another day is just inviting further damage as the culprit will just return for another feast.

### The collection tunnels

These structures have taken a pounding over the past few years and are definitely looking tired alongside the newly re-covered stock tunnels.

Roy has had to dismantle a whole section of benching, which was collapsing under the weight of the plants.

Rather than close the tunnel so he can re-build it, we have

autumn and thoroughly enjoyed the atmosphere of Earsham Street strewn with garden plant and product vendors - find out more by clicking on the image below:



### Plant Lover's Day

Join us at Creak Abbey for the Plant Lover's Day, which is always a treat - find out more by clicking on the image below:



### Helmingham Hall Spring Plant Fair

A favourite event for plant enthusiasts and one that attracts exhibitors from far and wide. Held in the grounds of one of Suffolk's most beautiful halls, you can also visit the gardens and take in the atmosphere of a very special place. Find out more by clicking on the image below:



### Suffolk Show

Back after two years away, it promises to be bigger and better than ever and a great showcase for all aspects of Suffolk life.

There is indeed something for everyone at the show - find out

trayed up the plants so visitors can still get in to see them during the season.

He is currently renewing the shade canopy on the first of the two tunnels and putting up some additional deer guards until we can complete the fencing.

Our plans to get a lot of our collection plants into the ground has left us scratching our heads over exactly how much space our potted collection plants will need in a few years' time so we are reluctant to build new structures in case we don't need them.



This is a beautiful time of year with all the vibrant fresh foliage erupting - the view above is from our large and giants tunnel. In a few weeks you will struggle to get around for all the leaves.

The trees and shrubs we have been purchasing for the arboretum are delighting us with their spring blossoms, flowers and foliage. It is a very exciting prospect to imagine them planted in the north field. Fingers crossed we are able to complete the ground works necessary to enable us to start the planting in the late autumn.

Speak soon,

**Team Mickfield Hostas**

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more by clicking on the image below:



### **The Virtual Flower Show**

Once again, this was a fun event to be involved with. Unfortunately, my live tour of the [Rubber Rockery](#) had to become a video chat about it with a video I took in 2020 used to back up the chat - it's all part of the fun of a live event.

There is some excellent content on the website from lots of brilliant nurseries and you can continue to view all the content created for this two-day event by clicking on the image below:

