



H. 'Little Aurora'

This month we feature another cultivar which has suffered an identity crisis over the years.

This small hosta has great colour and texture, which is probably why it has better pest resistance...

Confused identity

H. 'Little Aurora' was introduced by Paul Aden in 1978 as a cross between *h.*

'Tokudama Aureonebulosa' and *h. 'Golden Waffles'*.

The mature clump, used for registration, was grown by Paul in his garden in Baldwin, Long Island, New York.

Click on the map opposite to find out a few facts about the growing conditions found in New York.



Note: Lake Ontario (not shown) lies along the northern boundary of the state.

Doubt has been cast over the parentage of *h. 'Little Aurora'* mainly because it doesn't grow as large as its parentage would suggest. However, this cultivar can grow larger than the registered dimensions. We regularly see this in our sales plants when some appear to be racing ahead of the rest. The doubts over the parentage have been compounded by some growers selling *h. 'Little Aurora'* as *h. 'Golden Prayers'* for many years but when they are difficult to distinguish, and inconsistencies arise within the same batch of plants, this is understandable.

H. 'Golden Prayers' was also a Paul Aden introduction, in 1976. This cultivar is a cross between *h. 'Gold Cadet'* and *h. 'Golden Waffles'* and has the most delightfully golden, textured leaves. The sharing of *h. 'Golden Waffles'* as the pollen parent is possibly why these two cultivars look so similar when mature.



H. 'Little Aurora'



H. 'Golden Prayers'

Second generation

Strictly speaking, sports and hybrids from *h. 'Little Aurora'* should be considered separately from those of *h. 'Golden Prayers'*. However, there are significant differences of opinion over which cultivar was used to produce which offspring and separating them does illustrate why there is disagreement.

As usual we have restricted our investigation to plants we hold in our collection.

Which is which?

In our experience of growing both *h. 'Little Aurora'* and *h. 'Golden Prayers'* we have found there are subtle differences, which can help tell them apart:

Size of plant

This is rather an obvious one because *h. 'Little Aurora'* is a small cultivar and *h. 'Golden Prayers'* is a large cultivar. However, as the former doesn't always stay small, it can be more problematic to use this characteristic in isolation.

Flower

Descriptions state that *h. 'Little Aurora'* has pale lavender flowers, whilst *h. 'Golden Prayers'* has near white flowers - so little difference there. However, the flowers of *h. 'Little Aurora'* tend to grow on shorter scapes, often appearing to hide among the leaves. The flowers of *h. 'Golden Prayers'* tend to stand above the plant mound.

Maturity of plant

The leaves of *h. 'Golden Prayers'* generally take longer to develop the texture of those seen in the mature plant. The leaves also share the greener cast of the parent. The image of this cultivar (opposite) is an old one, which illustrates this nicely.

Agreed offspring from *h.* 'Little Aurora'



H. 'Goldbrook Girl'



H. 'Lakeside Accolade'



H. 'Tattoo'



H. 'Gosan Mina'



H. 'Little Sunspot'



H. 'Vanilla Cream'

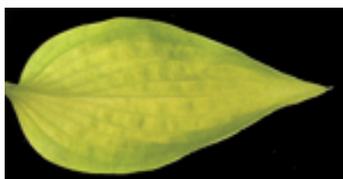


H. 'Just So'



H. 'Sultana'

Offspring attributed to *h.* 'Golden Prayers' but thought to have actually derived from *h.* 'Little Aurora'



H. 'Goldbrook Grace'



H. 'Gosan Gold Midget'



H. 'Gosan Hildegarde'

Agreed offspring from *h.* 'Golden Prayers'



H. 'City Lights'



H. 'Zounds'

Autumn planting

Harrogate Autumn Show is promoting the advantages of planning ahead for next year, by planting in the autumn.

This has long been popular practice among gardeners who still prefer to plant at this time of the year.

There are many advantages to this:

Autumn planting:

- allows perennials, shrubs and trees to establish easier
- ensures plants are less subject to the stresses caused by the heat of summer, and the need for extra watering
- weeds grow less rapidly at this time of year, which means less competition for your plants
- allows time for extra growth during dormancy, which makes for stronger plants once they emerge in the spring
- reduces the amount of urgent work required in the spring when everything is crying out for attention at the same time.

Keep a look out for more information on this subject from the **Harrogate Show**, and via the **Virtual Flower Show** website during September and October...

Next month: We continue this particular investigation with *h.* 'Vanilla Cream'

The advice and opinions contained within this monthly newsletter have been formed over more than 35 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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