

## *Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 143*

### **'Sum and Substance'**

#### **Hosta of the Year 2004**

Introduced in 1980 by Paul Aden, hosta 'Sum and Substance' is considered one of the best hostas. It was selected Hosta of the Year 2004 by the American Hosta Growers Association after receiving the 1984 Midwest Gold Award, the 1984 Eunice Fisher Award and the 1987 Presidents Exhibitor Trophy. In addition, it has several times been voted one of the most popular hostas in the American Hosta Society's Popularity Poll.

#### **Description**

'Sum and Substance' is one of the largest hostas. At maturity, it may be 36 inches tall and 80 inches wide. Although it grows rapidly for a large hosta, it may take three to four years to mature.

Its glossy, heart-shaped, thick-textured, yellow to gold leaves may be up to 18 inches long and 14 inches wide. While slugs and snails can be a problem for many hostas, 'Sum and Substance' is somewhat resistant to pest damage due to its thick foliage.

In mid to late summer, it produces lavender or pale-lilac, bell-shaped, fragrant flowers on 3- to 4-foot-long stalks. Unfortunately, these will tend to droop with time. Seed pods eventually form.

#### **Culture**

While most hostas are shade lovers, 'Sum and Substance' can be planted in full sun (where it will receive five to six hours of sun daily) or partial shade. In full sun the leaves are golden yellow while in partial shade they are just yellow.

'Sum and Substance' requires average, well-drained soil, which should be kept moist particularly during hot, sunny conditions.

#### **Landscape Uses**

Because of its large size and striking foliage, 'Sum and Substance' is best used as a specimen plant or large clump planting in a sunny location. Plants should be spaced at least 72 inches apart.

In a perennial border, its yellow or golden foliage works well with bronze or dark-green plants. 'Sum and Substance' may also be used in a container—provided that it is a large container. Finally, it can be planted on a slope to prevent soil erosion.

#### **Companion Planting**

In a border or naturalized area with 'Sum and Substance,' plant early-blooming bulbs and perennials for spring interest and bright-coloured annuals for summer interest.

Bulbs such as crocus, daffodils, snowdrops and tulips, and perennials such as ferns, hellebores, pulmonarias and wild gingers provide a show in spring when the hosta foliage is emerging. (The hosta foliage will eventually hide the bulb foliage after the bulbs have flowered.)

In summer, brightly coloured annuals such as begonia, coleus and impatiens will accentuate the striking yellow or golden hosta foliage.

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