

A Plant in My Garden

***Hosta* ‘Kiwi Full Monty’**

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We all add hostas to our collections on a whim. Some of those spur-of-the-moment purchases end up being disappointing, but others turn into incredible plants. When I first added *Hosta* ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ to my collection in 2002, it was still uncommon and fairly expensive. Who hasn’t purchased a plant on those two qualifications alone? That was one time I was lucky with an impulse buy, because ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ has developed into a favorite of both mine and my garden visitors.

*H.* ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ is deeply rooted in a line full of star-quality plants, including ‘Gypsy Rose’, ‘String Bikini’ and ‘Hanky Panky’. But when Barry Sligh, of Taunton Gardens in New Zealand, spotted ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ among a large planting of ‘Striptease’, he knew this sport was special. Wanting a name that continued the family theme, Barry reasoned that any stripper would turn blue in the cold, so “Full Monty” seemed appropriate.

The main difference between ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ and ‘Striptease’ is the color. *H.* ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ has frosty blue leaves with a narrow golden-yellow center and, like ‘Striptease’, is highlighted with white flashes between the two colors. The blue coloring is most striking in the spring, but the color holds very well in my garden even with a few hours of afternoon sun. *H.* ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ has an excellent growth rate and has increased into a 3-foot-wide mound in the four years I’ve had it. Slug and insect damage has not been a problem.

My ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ is growing in a bed that is home to more than 30 other hosta varieties. It is positioned at the edge of the bed and is guarded on both sides by various small and miniature hostas. Even with distinct and beautiful plants like ‘Praying Hands’ and ‘Lakeside Shore Master’ nearby, ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ draws the most attention from visitors. I’m not sure which they like more, the plant or its name!

Barry has observed ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ to be more stable than ‘Striptease’, which often throws the odd solid-green leaf. However, with ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ now being produced in large numbers by tissue culture, there have been reports of green off-types making their way through the culling process. Picking out a plant in person or ordering from a reputable nursery will ensure you end up with the real deal.

Collecting hostas is a bit of a gamble; sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. *H.* ‘Kiwi Full Monty’ is definitely a winner!