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## In the Garden: More hits than misses

It might have been a long, hot and dry summer but some plants lapped it up

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Steve Whysall shares what plants were star performers his Burnaby garden this year.

Photograph by: Vancouver Sun , Files

It is time to look back over the year and think about hits and misses in my garden — what worked and performed beautifully and what disappointed and didn't quite come up to scratch.

It has certainly been a challenging year with the prolonged heat wave, rainless days leading to drought conditions, followed by a destructive wind storm. But if you think back to spring, we were all delighted with the mild weather that followed an equally mild winter.

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Japanese cherry trees bloomed earlier than normal. The cherry blossom festival organizers were worried that all the blooms would be over and done by the time the festival started.

Gardeners were almost giddy with excitement over the warm days and the early season. We talked about gardens being as much as a month ahead, with camellias and magnolias all bursting into flower weeks ahead of schedule. Magnolias and rhododendrons in my garden had never looked better.

This wave of flowers continued with superb displays of tulips, daffodils, alliums and bleedinghearts and other early blooming perennials.

And this was quickly followed by a great show of May-flowering clematis, lilacs, enkianthus, choiysa and tree peonies and on into early summer with stunning displays of roses, Asiatic lilies, garden peonies and wonderful flowering trees.

For summer colour, I had fun this year playing with orange and blue combinations. I had success with the apricot-orange flowers of Lantana camara 'Marmalade' and Nemesia 'Blood Orange', mixed with blues of Sutura 'Blue Bubbles' and Lobelia 'Ultraviolet'.

But my most favourite orange flowers were those of Bidens 'Campfire', which sent sparks of colour flying in all directions. This is truly a firecracker of a plant that puts on a terrific show.

For the second successive year, I tried the orange tubular flowers of Cuphea 'Vermillionaire', growing clumps in two locations with different light levels to see how they would adapt — in a container in a full sun, afternoon shade spot, and in the ground in a mixed border in a part sun, part shade spot. 'Vermillionaire' loved the container but failed to thrive in the border, possibly because of too much shade and a little extra root competition. However, in both places it lived up to its reputation as an irresistible draw for hummingbirds.

This was also the year I renewed my love affair with browallia, a gentle, small-flowered plant that I fell in love with many years ago but couldn't seem to find again when I went looking for it. I planted two kinds in the Endless series; blue 'Illumination' and white 'Flirtation'. Both performed flawlessly in a window box as well as in individual containers dotted here and there around the garden. I'll definitely plant it again next year.

Not surprisingly, petunias did well this summer because of the never-ending sunshine and absence of rain.

I mixed burgundy-red Supertunia 'Black Cherry' with the Calibrachoa 'Pomegranate Punch' for what I thought was a sensational combination, with cleome 'Rosalita' as the centrepiece.

Two other Supertunias that took me by surprise were 'Pink Star Charm' and 'Violet Star Charm', both of which have small white flowers with a pink or blue star pattern.

I didn't expect to like them as much as I came to over the summer. Initially, they looked a little garish, but it turned out they worked very well mixed with plain blues and pinks. They were also very clean, leaving little petal litter for me to sweep up.

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