

Favorite plants of the summer



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Pyrrosia is one of Portland gardener Loree Bohl's favorite new plants. The plant is epiphytic so you can plant it in the ground or in an interesting mounted container.

PHOTO BY LOREE BOHL

FOR THOSE OF US LIVING in the Pacific Northwest, we have had quite a summer of extremes in the weather, just like much of the rest of the country.

Last winter we had low temperatures down to the high teens and low twenties, which is not the norm. Spring brought us abundant rain, which was welcome. Then came summer, with no rain, and high temperatures, over 100 F, which once again is not the norm for us.

Our plants have had to be resilient and adapt to these challenging weather conditions, and the adaptation has not always been successful.

Gardeners are also having to be resilient and recognize that sometimes change is a necessity. Who better to help them with reconciling this necessity than local garden centers showcasing new and different plants?

So, how should local garden centers find these new plants to tantalize gardeners with? Of course, it is always better to learn which plants are favorites from other nonprofessional gardeners. So I asked them this question: Given all the weather challenges, which was one of your favorite plants that was able to adapt

and thrive last summer?

Their answers allowed me to learn about some interesting plants, including some new to me.

Portland gardener Loree Bohl

has a special affinity for agaves, cactus and all things spiky. This affinity was the inspiration for the name of her garden blog, “danger garden,” but the plant that Loree selected is not “spiky.”

“One of my favorite plants this summer is *Pyrrosia*,” she said. “I love them all, but *Pyrrosia lingua* and its variations is probably the one that’s most available in garden centers.

“I have roughly 17 different types of *Pyrrosia*. They are generally considered to be hardy in Zone 8, but last winter was pretty rough on the ones in my garden. It was below freezing day and night for 72 hours, with ice and frigid wind. However, they have all bounced back and look great. Since the only ‘leaves,’ — it’s a fern, but they aren’t really typical fern fronds — are produced at the end of rhizomes, I was afraid they would never look full again, but they do!

“It’s a fun plant because not only can you grow it in the ground, it’s epiphytic so you can make interesting mounted



Portland gardener Lisa Fuller loves *Ornithogalum arabicum*, which is a bulb.

PHOTO BY LISA FULLER

containers.”

Pyrrosia is not usually available at most retail garden centers, but is more of a plant that would be found at a specialty nursery. It would probably be a new plant to most gardeners. With proper signage and an informative display, it could stimulate interest and become a new sales opportunity.

Salem gardener Elaine Jerauld

selected one of my favorite plants. I have had *Salvia* ‘Amistad’ in a pot on our deck for many years and I am glad Elaine selected this as one of her favorite plants. It is readily available in garden centers. It blooms all summer and into the fall, with hummingbirds visiting it continuously all season long.

Elaine says that, as the light in the garden begins to shift to the softness of fall, *Salvia* ‘Amistad’ continues to brighten the garden with its deep purple highlights.

“This plant is scattered throughout our garden as a notable pop of color. The hummingbirds love it as do the smaller



What I'm Hearing



Hummingbirds love *Salvia* 'Amistad', one of Elaine Jerauld's favorite new plants.

PHOTO BY ELAINE JERAULD



Portland gardener Amy Campion loves *Solidago* 'Golden Baby', which attracts tons of pollinators.

PHOTO BY AMY CAMPION

pollinators, so as a result, this is a very busy plant around here. It also has been consistent for overwintering these last strange-weather winters and, while it may show up a bit later than before because of our colder springs, it does show up," she said.

To friends who are new to gardening, I always recommend that *Salvia* 'Amistad' be put on their shopping list because it brings so much to the garden palette. Also of note, bright pink *Salvia* 'Chiapensis' has been blooming into January at our place.

Portland gardener Amy Campion moved to Oregon in 2013, having previously lived and gardened in Cincinnati, Ohio. She has become a spokesperson for drought-tolerant and native plants. She also has a keen interest in native bees and other native insects.

Amy says, "Here is one of my favorite summer plants, *Solidago* 'Golden Baby'. It blooms in July, (with a little bit of rebloom later in the summer), and attracts a ton of pollinators, which is why

I love it. But it is also a very nice garden plant in general."

It should be available at most garden centers.

"It stays small and doesn't spread like some other goldenrods and is very well behaved! And it's quite drought tolerant. Also, it's very easy to start from cuttings, so I like to propagate it and share it with friends. I like many goldenrods, but this is probably my favorite one."

Portland gardener Lisa Fuller has chosen a bulb, *Ornithogalum arabicum*, as one of her favorite plants. It is a bulb that is new to me.

Lisa has been in the floral industry and said that this is also one of her favorite flowers to use in arrangements. This is her first year growing it here, so the winter hardiness is not known to her. Thus, Lisa suggests, that she will give it some protection this winter.

Lisa says, "This plant is very difficult to photograph because of the stems that

are 5 feet tall! It forms a sturdy clump of broad sword-like leaves in early spring and a single stem emerges from each bulb and blooms over a very long period.

"It is a great long lasting cut flower and is a perennial with a zone rating of 8–10. I'll probably keep this in a pot and overwinter it in an unheated garage. This is also known as 'Star of Bethlehem,' but the variety *O. arabicum* has distinctive almost black 'eyes' which are the developing seed pods."

These four gardeners mentioned four different plants, and it is interesting that the four plants are all quite different. Three of them are plants that I have never grown and the *Pyrrhosia lingua* is one that I have never heard of.

Asking gardeners these types of questions might give garden centers some ideas for new plants to add to their collection. Plants such as these would not just appeal to the average gardener, but to the ardent gardener as well. ©