

Last Bits of the Summer Garden by Fran Benton

Ah the last bits of summer make the garden a sweet place to be. I hope everyone has enjoyed their space as much as we have enjoyed ours this year. There are always a few jobs to do in preparation for a really fine garden next year. I like the slacker jobs that mean I can sit in the garden with pastry and coffee and make cunning plans. The first thing I write is my list of what I will grow next year. This year I grew Canna lilies and I certainly will grow them again. In fact they are so easy I might grow more. I put some of them in pots and those were the most successful. They have such nice tropical leaves like bananas but none of the hassle or fuss of bananas. I discovered they like to have their roots crowded in a pot. They also really like tons of sun. My friend Iris brings her canna inside and lets it grow as a houseplant.

One thing that is going on my 'do this again' list is growing a squash or pumpkin in the flowerbeds. It gives you something to smile about when all the lovely flowers are dying back. And you get something to eat!



One plant that really performed for me this year is *Salvia microphylla* "hot lips" (left). The hummingbirds used this plant all summer long. I am taking a ton of cuttings that I hope to share with everyone next year. Another success from the garden is the Castor Bean, *Ricinus communis* (below). My plant is the red variety and it has been a great hit with garden visitors. Be careful with young visitors or nosy pets as this plant is the source of the deadly poison Ricin. One funny thing I grew this year was 'Freedom Dream' a type of marijuana. Well that was a

disappointment! From the permitted number of seeds I grew 3 males and one female. I didn't

know the males produce huge amounts of pollen. I grew them in the spring in the greenhouse and discovered that the pollen gave me huge bouts of sneezing and coughing. All four plants were banished to the patio where they continued to blast out clouds of pollen. As my drugs of choice are coffee and quality pastry I consigned the dismal results of my 'four plant grow op' to the compost heap. Maybe the pillbugs got a bit of a buzz! The last bit of garden excitement was the second flower of my cactus *Echinopsis Elegant Lady*. I have some babies of this plant and if you are interested you can email me and I'll arrange a prickling. Or maybe a spiny embrace? Fran.Benton@VIU.Ca



Happy gardening!