

In The Garden

Happy Aussies, Grub Robin, and Mr. Pine Siskin

We do live in odd and challenging times. Nobody contests that statement these days especially after the heat dome fried so many gardens and left the coast reeling. What really surprised me were the plants that actually adored the big heat. Chief among them in my garden is our happy Aussie bottlebrush. I bought this plant from a business called Furious Foliage that sold unusual perennials at local grocery stores. The owner of furious foliage had a curious and discerning eye for plants that were unusual and top notch. Sadly he folded his business a number of years ago. Many of us miss those plants. Happily I bought his plants and propagated from them with enthusiasm. In our yard enthusiasm does not equal success as distraction intervenes and some things get forgotten. At a trip to Nanaimo last week I saw a tee shirt at a local garden centre that said "Easily distracted by plants"! That tee shirt was made for me! Let's get back to the happy Aussie. Bottlebrush or Callistemon, is a quintessential Australian plant that likes good drainage and lots of sun. Well we sure had that in the heat dome! It is blooming it's fool heart out and feeding bees, hummingbirds and butterflies too! It is a little bit tender but with our winters being warmer it is quite pleased to grow in our yard.

It seems that most of our garden plants did well in the heat as long as they had some shade and were well watered. I did notice on a local bike ride that some of the young fir trees in exposed areas had quite a bit of needle burn. It remains to be seen how that will effect



them long term.

My other two garden pleasures are the birds. There was the return of Grub Robin. This guy (or girl) has made a specialty out of excavating the lawn for large white grubs. There is a huge battle between the tenacious grub and the robin. Most grubs get a big stretch and then a fatal peck or two and then it's off to pop that grub into a baby robin's mouth. This bird has been doing this for 2 years now. None of the other robins seem to have this skill.

In the middle of the big heat we found Pine Siskin nestlings scabbling around the trees in the yard. One was on his side being attacked by ants. I usually leave wildlife alone and let nature take it's course but this was too much for me. I rescued Mr. Pine Siskin and picked the ants off him. I brought him in out of the heat and plopped him in a plastic crate. As he gaped his mouth I knew he was desperately hungry. A bit of research turned up a diet for him and for 4 days I stuffed him full of soft cat kibble and boiled eggs. It astounded me how fast he sprouted a tail and feathers! As soon as he was able to hop around and fly a bit he was taken out to Wildarc in Metchosin to be reacquainted with his bird buddies. The problem with young birds is that they will imprint on you and think they are a person. I assured him he was going to enjoy being a Pine Siskin again and find his own diner of bugs and creepy crawlers! I hope your garden is as interesting as mine has been over the past few months. For garden fans the Mill Bay Garden Club will be starting back in September. Come and join us! Details are online. *Happy gardening!*

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