

GARDEN
NEWS

Gold for Dahlia 'David Howard'
©Barbara Neumann 2011

GOING FOR GOLD

ANDREA BRUNSENDORF
HEAD GARDENER

September and October are the months when a gardener starts to plan next year's planting schemes for spring and summer. An important part of this process is to review this year's floral displays to identify successes and failures around the Garden, and it is always better for one's head to address the failures first.

This summer with all its rain, unusually cool temperatures and lack of sunshine hasn't just been challenging for gardeners, it also has been really tough on our plants, especially on our clary sage along Paper Buildings.

The predictions of a dry summer disappeared at the same rate the rain fell on the Garden after the hosepipe ban was imposed. And on top of the wet, the temperature hardly rose above 18°C for months-on end, at which point even tough old boots like clary sage had enough and started to rot-off. One comfort in all this was a recent headline in one of our trade magazines 'Summer is dead, long live autumn'. Every garden (and gardener) has faced such failures this year.

It is therefore much healthier for the spirit to look forward and start selecting plants that have done us proud in the midst of such misery and dahlias are at the top of the list, especially for the High Border, as they seemed to shrug

off the summer-wet and are the heralds of the Michaelmas term.

I have recently been invited by the RHS to join their team of judges reviewing the Dahlia trials, where 80-odd cultivars are considered over three years for the ultimate achievement – the Award of Garden Merit (AGM). At the trial beds in their garden at Wisley we examine each cultivar for strong constitution, reasonable resistance to pests and diseases, stability of flower form and colour, and excellence for ordinary garden use. I am a bit more cavalier at the Inner Temple Garden, and decided to

Silver for Dahlia
'Hillcrest Royal'



GARDEN STAFF NEWS

simplify matters and mentally entered the cultivars we have into a sort of Dahlia Olympics. Points were given for the earliness and quality of bloom, the strength of flower colour and form, and stamina to cope with our conditions on the High Border. I make no apology for not being entirely impartial in my judgement and there is no appeal against the judge's final decision: Bronze goes to Dahlia coccinea for being the first one to flower in this difficult year with its single and elegant blooms.

Silver to D. 'Hillcrest Royal' for the most striking magenta flowers.

Gold (not much of a surprise here) goes to D. 'David Howard' for the most stunning display of en-masse golden-orange double blooms that stand proud above beautiful dark bronze foliage. Despite the lack of sunshine D. 'David Howard' started to bloom before all the other big-headed dahlias in the border and will, without fail, shine out until the onset of the first frosts.

The clary sage may have got the wooden spoon this year, but in my first year here it got a silver medal from people like Robin Lane Fox, and I know we can do better than that; it wasn't just beginner's luck. So next year's plant order includes some more of it and (weather gods permitting) let's go for Gold.

Bronze for Dahlia coccinea



EMMA ALLEN

The Inner Temple Garden bids a fond farewell to Emma Allen, who has worked in the Garden for the past year. Emma is taking the opportunity to move up the career ladder, taking on the role of Walpole Park Manager for Ealing Council. We wish Emma every success in her future positions.

CHRIS HUDSON

The Garden also bids farewell to Chris Hudson, who left the Inn at the end of August after undertaking a one-year traineeship at the Inner Temple Garden. He has been a wonderful protégé, but great opportunities await him as he joins the ranks of the gardening elite. Chris has now started the prestigious three-year Kew Diploma at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and we wish him well in his studies.



PIN DIX, a novice in horticulture, has joined the Garden team as our new trainee; she brings people management and organisational skills to the garden from her 17 years of experience in stage management. As part of our one-year traineeship, Pin will be studying for her RHS Certificate – Level 2 at Capel Manor College.

