Question and Answer

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Q. Can we grow wolfberry here? The fruit is receiving lots of attention for its nutritional and medicinal value.

A. I have not grown it but the nurseries are selling the plants and some gardeners are growing it. Wolfberry is also called goji. The plant can be grown by transplants or seeds in the garden or a container. It looks to me like a Salvia greggii (without the flowers!). Goji requires full sun and alkaline soil. It is drought tolerant. Accounts on the internet say that the deer will eat it. It is deciduous and relatively cold tolerant.

Q. I let my cauliflower go to long on the plant and it looks milky and disheveled. It is not attractive enough to eat raw but can I still cook with it?

A. Yes, it will still taste like cauliflower and have all the cooking characteristics that you expect, even if it is over-ripe.

Q. We grew larkspur in our raised bed last year and now have lots of seedlings growing everywhere including among the snapdragons and stocks. Will it work if we leave them in place so they can bloom with or after the other cool weather annuals?

A. No, that probably will not work well. The larkspurs will grow faster and larger than the other cool weather annuals, even Rocket snapdragons. They will completely overwhelm the garden. Designate a portion of the garden for the larkspur and pull or transplant the rest. One 8 ft. row in my raised bed provides blooms for the hummingbirds and butterflies and plenty of seeds for the next year’s plants.

Q. Besides peach trees, what other plants benefit by an application of dormant oil?

A. Commercial growers apply it to pecans to control phylloxera and other insects but it may not be practical in your landscape. Following the label instructions closely, you can apply it to euonymus, holly, citrus, sago palms and other evergreen plants that have scale in addition to apples, plums, and pears. It may defoliate winter annuals that are accidentally sprayed.

Q. You and Jerry Parsons on your South Texas Gardening radio show have been driving me crazy with your tongue- in- cheek talk about mowing annual bluegrass and horse herb for a winter turf rather than killing it with herbicides. I don’t believe it doesn’t hurt the “real lawn” if it is left in place. I kill the weeds on my Bermuda grass with Round-up when the Bermuda grass is dormant. It only kills the green weeds and does not hurt the Bermuda grass.

A. Sorry, that you don’t think much of our Sustainable Winter Turf idea. For us it is easier to mow the weeds than to fight a losing battle trying to control them with herbicides! In our experience the tactic of spraying supposedly “dormant” Bermuda grass with glyphosate has resulted in dead areas in the permanent lawn.

Q. As you recommended we left our hummingbird feeders in place this winter and have been rewarded by two regular visitors. The birds are small and have some red-brown on their back along with tracings on the throat and breast. It is hard to be sure but do you think they are rufous hummingbirds? Will they next in our area?

A. Based on the description you provided and their penchant for wintering here, I believe your visitors are rufous hummingbirds. They probably will not nest in our area. You may have them to enjoy for another month before they head back west.