Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. We live in an area where the oak wilt is a problem and our neighborhood is loaded with live oaks. What are the recommended trees to plant in such a situation?

A. Consider cedar elm, Mexican sycamore, Chinese pistache, and pecan or Montezuma cypress so you can diversify the variety of trees in the neighborhood. Those 5 species are not susceptible to oak wilt.

Q. What does it mean when some of my onions are going to seed? I tried the red ­­­­Creole this year because you said it had a stronger flavor than most of the other onions offered as transplants.

A. I am having the same problem with my red creole. It may be a variety more prone to going to seed when the winter is warm and the transplants may have been larger when they were planted. To salvage the onions going to seed harvest and use them first. The bulbs won’t be large but they should be high enough quality to use if you can harvest them before they are too far along.

Q. I sprayed my peach tree with malathion as recommended but it defoliated my young Florida king tree. It looks like the tree may die. I mixed the insecticide twice as strong as the label recommended. Could that have caused the problem?

A. Of course, you should always follow label instructions, that is the law, but if the malathion was mixed only twice as potent as the label called for, I would not expect the severe damage you are describing. Is there a chance that the sprayer was not cleaned out properly after it was used for Round-up or a 2-4-D herbicide? I have found it best to use a separate sprayer for herbicides and insecticides.

Q. There is a large evergreen shrub that is pretty non-descript most of the year but it now has off-white small flowers that are show in large clusters. The main thing though is that it is very fragrant! Do you know what it is?

A. Sounds like standard pittosporum. It is an excellent evergreen shrub that grows to 8feet tall and 12 feet around. It is very drought tolerant and in my neighborhood the deer do not eat it.

Q. We put our St Augustine lawn in last year. It never went dormant and is growing well now. There are no weeds. Should we wait to fertilize or can we go ahead? We mowed every two weeks all winter.

A. You have a choice of fertilizing now or waiting until about May 1. It is often best to be cautious about new lawns but if you sodded early last fall, your lawn would qualify under the ‘fertilize after you have mowed real grass twice”. The roots of an actively growing lawn are capable of utilizing the nutrients from a fertilizer application.

Q. What are my choices for annual color in the shade this summer? Can I plant them now?

A. Consider begonias, coleus, caladium or pentas. Wait on the caladium until May 1 but the other color plants can be planted as transplants now.