Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. My lawn was very attractive this winter even though it was mostly horseherb and rescue grass. There was plenty of rain and I kept it mowed. Now that the rains have stopped and the hot weather has arrived, my lawn does not look so great. The horseherb and rescue grass are gone and the St Augustine grass has been slow to fill in. It is growing but slowly and with chlorosis. It is late in the year for fertilizing but I think it may help. Do you agree? We have access to water for irrigation.

A. I think you are correct about the advantage of fertilizing even though it is later than we usually recommend. Use a product like Iron Plus that includes both nitrogen and iron.

Q. Do daylilies have any problems? I am growing them for the first time this year and they seem invincible. Why don’t you recommend them more aggressively?

A. Daylilies are an excellent perennial for use in Central Texas landscapes. I especially like the large flowered orange, yellow, and rust colored selections. Daylilies are relatively drought tolerant and pest free other than deer and slugs and snails. Both sets of pests will work very hard to access daylilies. Use a strong fence to keep the deer away and use slug and snail bait to control the slugs and snails.

Q. Is it a problem that our live oak trees have started to drop some leaves since the hot dry weather has started? We have very poor, thin soil but the trees were very lush with all the rain.

A. This is the first report I have heard of a leaf drop this summer because of dry weather after a very wet period, but it is to be expected. The sandier and thinner the soil in your landscape, the quicker that a leaf drop in response to hot dry weather will occur. The trees make an adjustment in leaf load that is necessary but should be fine in the long run.

Q. When do we pull our spring tomato plants to make way for the fall crop? I still have tomatoes on the vines but the yield has dropped off considerably and the foliage is declining. It looks like both spider mites and blight are moving in.

A. It is time to pull the spring planted tomatoes. Harvest all the full-size fruit, it will ripen on the counter in the house. Carefully discard the old plants in the garbage so that the spider mites aren’t left on the tomato-growing site. Prepare the soil for the new plants by incorporating 5lbs (10 cups) of slow-release fertilizer and 2 inches of compost to each 100 sq. ft. of planting area. Slow release lawn fertilizer with the formula 19-5-9 works well. Plant the new transplants after mid-July. Use some heat-setters like Tycoon, Solar Fire, and BHN968 plus fast producers such as Surefire, Lavaca, and Roma.