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Q&A

Q: Tell me about the Chinese pistache tree. Is it a good choice for a shade tree in our area?

A: Chinese pistache was identified by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service about 25 years ago as a desirable shade tree choice. It grows relatively fast to 30 or 40 feet tall. The compound leaves have small leaflets about the size of live oak leaves. For the early part of its life, Chinese pistache grows straight up with little horizontal growth. It eventually makes a well-formed attractive crown. There are female Chinese pistache and males. The berries, produced by the females are a favorite bird food. Chinese pistache is drought-tolerant and has good fall color. It makes a good deciduous shade tree for our area.

Q: How do we know if we have grubs in our lawn? How do we treat them?

A: Grubs eat the roots of the lawn grass so you end up with a moth-eaten look with scattered dead areas. Usually, you can pull up the dead areas like a toupee if grubs are involved. You should also be able to dig a shallow square and find two to four grubs per square foot in the upper two inches of soil. Control grubs with a granular soil insecticide applied right now.

Q: My summer squash just seem to die on the vine. The foliage also looks weak and diseased.

A: You didn’t mention squash vine borers but that is the main problem with summer squash at this time of year. Check the stems near the base of the plant. There are probably holes with crumbly material hanging out at the base of the stems. At this point, it is too late to control squash vine borers. Pull the plants and next year, plant a square stemmed summer squash like tatuma, or apply Sevin powder at the growing point every week.

Q: Which vinca is it that is resistant to aerial phytophora?

A: Cora vinca is the selection that is most disease-resistant.

Q: Is four o’clock a weed or can I declare it a summer blooming plant? It has attractive flowers and is drought-tolerant.

A: In the right place, four o’clock does make a good landscape plant. You didn’t mention that the deer don’t eat it. I keep fighting it as a weed, but would probably do better if I also declared it a desirable summer flower.