

Gardening Q&A

Distribute 04-01-2019

Q. I didn't realize that the grass-like plants growing in my lawn were weeds (rescue grass) and so I fertilized with slow-release lawn fertilizer to try to green it up when it began to yellow from the heat. After reading your article, I figured out that I now have well fertilized weeds that are going to decline now because of the heat! What are the repercussions? Should I fertilize in early May when the regular lawn grass will have greened up? Is the fertilizer wasted?

A. A small portion of the fertilizer is wasted because your lawn grass does not have a full root system developed at this point but most of the nutrients will be utilized. In a slow-release lawn fertilizer 50% of the nitrogen is released slowly over the 4 months after it is applied. You don't need to fertilize again until the fall.

Q. What is the deal with the ground cover vinca. It looks great now but at some point, this summer the leaves will melt down to nothing. Is it a disease that we can treat?

A. Vinca groundcover has several problems including leaf rollers that feed on the leaves and susceptibility to fungal dieback if the drainage is poor. You can try and prevent the leaf rollers feeding by spraying with malathion or a Bt product every week starting now, but it is often not successful.

Q. If we put the bedstraw plants, we collect in the compost pile, will the seeds be viable next winter if we spread the finished compost before then?

A. Yes, even if most of the seed decomposes in the composting process some seed will be deposited at the edge of the pile and not be subjected to the heating-up that breaks down the plant material. That distribution of seed is minor compared to the seed that is spread around by pets and wind and seed drop.

Q. As per your advice we place our week-old hummingbird sugar water in a shallow clay pan for the butterflies. Is it a problem if the honey bees use it? They seem to prefer the old nectar in the clay saucer to the new sugar water in the feeder.

A. No, both the butterflies and bees are worthy recipients of the old sugar water. It is better than wasting it!

Q. When can we plant Bermuda grass by seed? Last year we planted it in February and didn't have any luck with germination.

A. On or about May 1 is usually a good time to seed your prepared site. It is best if you apply enough compost and soil, so you have 6 inches of soil for the grass. Till in the soil and add 10 cups of slow-release lawn fertilizer per 100 sq. ft of bed and rake it smooth. Add the fertilizer at least 2 weeks before putting down the seed.