

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. We like our Sandankwa Viburnum but about one-third of the leaves browned from the heat and drought before our watering and the recent rains stopped the process. Should we pull the brown leaves off the plants or can we leave them? They aren't the most attractive hedge when they have so many brown leaves.

A. You can proceed either by leaving the brown leaves or by removing them. I recommend that they be left to save yourself lots of work and to contribute to the total cover available to the birds in the area. The plants won't be hurt either way. The brown leaves will eventually fall off on their own.

Q. We want to grow roses, but we heard about the tough modern roses and old-fashioned roses that are supposedly easier to care for, is it true? What are some of the selections to consider?

A. Yes, the tough modern roses and old-fashioned roses are easier to care for. They don't need weekly fungicide and insecticide sprays. Pruning can be done on your own schedule if at all. The roses described even rate as xeriscape plants. They bloom better with regular watering but can survive without it. Consider Belinda's Dream, Katy Road Pink (Carefree Beauty), Mrs. Dudley Cross, Martha Gonzales, Knockout, or Grandma's Yellow.

Q. All our seeded vegetables in the winter garden except Crawford lettuce have germinated, The GVST member that handed out at one of their classes said it was fresh seed. What could be the problem?

A. The most common problem in lettuce failing to germinate is if the seed is covered with soil at planting. It should just be placed on the soil surface where the soil is leveled and moist. Get some more seed and try again.

G. We have tropical milkweed that is attracting both Queen butterflies and Monarchs. We were bragging about the Monarchs laying eggs and producing caterpillars this fall. One of our other club members said they were the Queens rather than the Monarchs. How can you tell the difference?

A. It is most likely Queen caterpillars because the Monarchs that come here in the fall are just resting before they move on to the wintering grounds near Mexico City. The easiest way to differentiate is to count the antennae like appendages on the caterpillars. Queens have 3 sets including a pair rising from the middle of the body. The Monarchs just have two sets, one at each end of the body.

Q. Is it too late to plant spinach transplants? How about onions?

A. No, this is a great time to plant spinach transplants. Wait until December to plant onion transplants.