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**“Q&A”**

Q: Is there any way to discourage snakes from entering our yard? We are surrounded by woods.

A: There are several options to consider. Leave an open area around the border of your landscape. It can be low-mowed grass or decomposed granite. Snakes don’t seem to like crossing open areas. Cats and terriers are good snake deterrents as they are usually fast enough to harass but avoid being bit.

Q: My cauliflower and broccoli plants are not forming compact heads. They have small buds spread over the stalk and the plants are also very small. They are in a new raised bed, so the soil should be good.

A: The phenomenon you are describing is called ricing. It could be from a lack of fertilizer and perhaps water. Newly built raised beds with commercial compost are very low on nutrients. Enrich the soil with some high nitrogen fertilizer.

Q: Is it time to apply the pre-emergent to prevent sand burs?

A: Yes, you need to do it as quickly as possible. Consider Amaze, XL or Crabgrass Preventer.

Apply a second dose at the end of May. Sand burs will begin germinating as soon as the soil warms up.

Q: What are some of the best tough roses for the landscape?

A: “Knockout” grows to about 6 feet tall and has red flat flowers about half-dollar size. “Belinda’s Dream” grows to 6 feet tall and has light pink flowers that make good cut flowers. “Carefree Beauty Pink” (Katy Road), makes a 4-inch flat bloom that is a darker pink than “Belinda’s Dream”. It also produces rose hips.

The above roses are tough modern roses that qualify as xeriscape plants. They survive without irrigation, but bloom better with it, and do not require regular spraying or pruning.

Q: Do you know of a non-invasive bamboo? I need a quick growing shrub/tree to hide my view of the shopping complex behind my home, but I am afraid bamboo would take over my entire back yard.

A: I am not familiar with any desirable bamboo options, but consider these plants:

Loquat is a tall evergreen tree. You might also want to use the new cold-tolerant Satsuma, Arctic Frost. Ligustrum grows fast and makes a tall hedge. “Wonderful” pomegranate is thick and tall, but it is deciduous. Standard yaupon holly would also work. Go to [plantanswers.com](http://plantanswers.com/) for other options.

For questions about horticulture, water conservation and the environment, email Calvin Finch at [Calvin.finch@tamu.edu](mailto:Calvin.finch@tamu.edu)