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Q&A

Q: Do deer eat red yucca? We are trying to develop a low-water-use landscape that the deer will not eat.

A: Deer eat the flowers of red yucca, but not the foliage. Do you have esperanza, iris, Texas mountain laurel, thyrallis, vitex, four o’clocks, salvia, other yuccas and cactus on your low-water-use deer-proof list? Visit plantanswers.com to review a comprehensive deer-proof list.

Q: What did we decide, do we need to dig up the gladioli bulbs after the leaves brown, or can we leave them in place to grow and bloom next year?

A: I am leaving mine in place. They have bloomed well over the past two years without removing and replanting them.

Q: We had some construction completed on our house. The trucks and tractors compacted the soil. Our lawn looks terrible. Do you think it would help to rent an aerator or add compost now?

A: Yes, I think that would help restore the soil. Find one of the aerators to rent that cuts the plugs from the soil and places it on the soil surface. After the aeration and top dressing, you could plug in a few squares of sod in the worst areas, or just wait for the lawn to spread into the restored areas.

Q: What is the salvia that grows in the shade? It has red flowers and seems to reseed each year.

A: It is the Salvia coccinea. It is a great plant because of its drought tolerance and its shade tolerance. The flowers are attractive and provide nectar for hummingbirds. Deer do not eat Salvia coccinea. You receive the seed in most Texas wildflower mixes or you can buy it from Wildseed Farms. Google the website.

Q: Our old live oak tree has hollow parts and is close to the house. The foliage looks good, but should we be worried it will fall on the house?

A: It is always good to be alert to the threat. Call an arborist to assess the danger. The good news is that almost all live oaks have hollow areas, but they can still be structurally strong.