Question and Answer

Distributed March14 2016

* Q. My Florida King peaches bloomed and now have small fruit. What should I be spraying to protect them from insects? Last year we had problems with stink bugs.

1. About the only insecticide that can protect peaches from stink bugs is carbaryl (Sevin). Spray them every week with Sevin and a fungicide such as Captan for blemish free fruit.

* Q. We are going to purchase some commercial compost to refresh our raised beds. How much do you think we need? How do we calculate how much material is needed?

1. Two inches incorporated across the whole bed is the minimum required. Three inches is better. Determine how many square feet of garden surface there is and multiply by .25 ft. (3inches) and then divide by 27 to determine cubic yards. If your raised bed garden is 8ft by 40 ft. that is 320 sq. ft. Multiply the 320 sq. ft. by .25 ft. equals 80cuft. Divide 80 by 27 and it is about 3 cubic yards. At least one of the horticultural supply companies has a calculator on its website—Quality Organic in San Antonio. Us e the calculator to determine how much mulch or compost is needed.

* Q. Is it warm enough to put the tomato transplants in the garden? What is the new Rodeo Tomato for 2016? What other varieties are recommended?

1. Yes, March 15 is the usual planting date. If the spring was cool, April 1 would be better. The Rodeo tomato for 2016 is Red Deuce. Other recommended selections are Tycoon, Solar Fire, Celebrity, BHN 968, Tigress, Valley Cat, Phoenix, and 444. If you can’t find those varieties, pick a variety that is determinate (sets fruit quickly on medium size plant) and a heat setter. It should also have good disease resistance.

* Q. Remind me what we should be doing on the lawn now. Is it time to fertilize?

1. It is too early to fertilize. Wait until you have mowed real grass twice, usually in late April. It is still a good time to aerate and top dress. Also apply a preemergent herbicide to prevent sand burs and crab grass. Use Crabgrass Preventer, Amaze, XL, or Dimension. Follow label instructions.

* Q. Can we still prune the live oak trees now? What about spraying for ball moss?

1. The best time to prune oak trees is the coldest part of winter or the hottest part of summer but they can be pruned anytime as long as the wounds are painted immediately after they are cut. The paint protects the oak from infection by oak wilt. Yes, now is a good time to spray Kocide to control ball moss. Ball moss is not a parasite and does not hurt the tree but if you do not like its looks, it can be removed.