Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. Our peach trees did really well this year and I want to contribute for another good crop next year. Two pesticide treatments are on my list for this winter: Kocide for bacterial diseases and dormant oil for the scale and hiding insects. What is the best timing?

A. Kocide and dormant oil can actually be applied together but that is not usually the best timing. Apply the Kocide now. If the leaves have not fallen yet, the treatment will encourage them to drop. Apply the dormant oil after all the foliage is gone and during a period when temperatures will stay above 45degrees for 2 days. Sometime in January is fine. Follow label instructions on all pesticides whether they are organic or manufactured.

Q. Why are our cyclamen blooms browning? They are in the sun but I thought they could survive winter sun?

A. If the temperatures stayed below 55 degrees the cyclamen could survive some sun but in my experience they decline quickly in the sun if temperatures reach into the 80’s like happened in November. For best results grow cyclamen in the shade. Plant pansies, stock, dianthus, snapdragons and calendula in the sun.

Q. Which is correct? Should we mow our St Augustine low in the winter or high?

A. St Augustine grass makes a thicker sod when it is mowed at 3 inches or higher. There is not much grass growth in the winter but a thicker, taller lawn seems to do a better job in limiting weed germination. Mow your winter St Augustine at the same or a higher height than you mow in the summer.

Q. Please provide a list of recommended shade trees. We purchased a new house that does not have any shade. When can we plant shade trees?

A. Texas red, oak, live oak, cedar elm, Mexican sycamore, bur oak, chinquapin oak, and Chinese pistache are all high quality long-lived shade trees. Visit plantanswers.com for more information on growth rate, fall color, drought tolerance, and pest issues. The winter is the best time of the year to plant shade trees. Dig the holes as deep as the container and 2 to 3 times as wide. Cover the root area with 3 to 4 inches of mulch. Water generously at planting and every time the soil dries under the mulch.

Q. Is there still time to plant English peas? What variety should we plant? Do we need a trellis?

A. There is still time to plant English peas. Soak the seed overnight in water and then plant the seed against tomato cages or some other type of trellis. I would plant sugar peas because they are ready to harvest more quickly than a pea that needs to fill the pod. Both will work though.