**Plantanswers.com Q’s & A’s**

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Q: What are some good Christmas gifts for gardeners?

A: I think gift certificates from their favorite nursery are usually the best choice, but there are also many good books. Check out Greg Grant’s books Home Landscaping Texas and Texas Fruit and Vegetable Gardening. Bill Welch’s Perennial Garden Color is hard to beat. For a basic text, consider Neil Sperry’s Complete Guide to Texas Gardening. Other good gifts are gardening gloves, a set of pruners or a shovel. If you want a more expensive present, consider one of the tillers for raised beds. Mantis is one of several good brands. How about a chain saw? Stihl saws last forever.

Q: We have a Chinese pistache tree that is loaded with berries. Well, at least it was loaded. The birds are eating them before they fall! Why don’t we hear more about this shade tree? It has good fall color and a good shape. It also grows very fast.

A: You are right. Chinese pistache is a good shade tree for our area. I sometimes recommend it for landscapes that want a good wildlife plant and something different. A point that may detract from its desirability include the Chinese pistache is an unattractive stick when it is young. The well-shaped crown takes a few years to develop. It also is an exotic, which turns off some native plant buffs. Sometimes in heavy soils in wet years, Chinese pistache shows an herbicide-like symptom of strangely colored leaves that attract attention. It always seems to grow through the problem.

Q: The radishes that I planted this fall produced lots of foliage, but no bottom. They are in full sun. What do you think is the problem?

A: Sometimes if radishes are planted or grown in hot weather, they grow the way you are describing. Try planting again now that it is cooler.

Q: Have you heard of the Texas Legend onion? Is it as good as they say?

A: The Texas Legend was developed by Texas A&M University. It is the replacement for the 1015Y onion. The suppliers say it ripens 15 days faster than 1015Y, produces more large bulbs and stores better. I have not grown it yet, but do not have any reason to doubt the claims.