Q + A

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Q. I was disappointed in my snapdragons this year. We planted them a little late but there was very little bloom and now the foliage looks good but no flowers. What is the problem?

A. Snapdragons usually have two bloom periods in a winter. If you plant them in October, you can expect blooms until about Dec. 15 or whenever we receive our first freeze. Expect a second (often more impressive) bloom period in late February, March and April.

Q. Is there anywhere I can find a compilation of your articles on horticulture in South Texas? I would like to have them as a reference. If not, you certainly have the making of a book.

A. Thanks for the kind words. My articles from recent years are archived on plantanswers.com and wctc.tamu.edu

Q. A particular interest of mine is irrigation technology and improvements to the efficiency of drip irrigation technologies specifically designed for arid climates. Is there a resource where I can find the best consultants and product for arid lands irrigation technology?

A. The publication “Drip Gardening” is available on the website thehillcountrygardener.com. It is a reference for residential use of drip irrigation.

Q. I have an almond tree, and the last two years I’ve been having trouble with the almonds turning black and shriveling up. I don’t know what the trouble could be. I did get 1 ½ good crops before this trouble started. I would appreciate any advice you could give me.

A. Almonds are notorious for pollination problems in our climate. Cold weather at bloom time is one issue. The shriveled up nuts are a symptom. I believe the best you can do is enjoy the tree and let the weather do as it will.

 Q. Oak wilt is in our neighborhood. The arborist I contacted said we would need three years of treatment to protect our tree. It is very expensive; the fungicide Alamo (propiconazole) applied under pressure to the root flares of the trees.

A. Yes, I see that some certified arborists are advocating for two to three treatments. This appears to be a recent phenomenon. When I was active in the oak wilt education effort 16 years ago, one treatment was deemed adequate especially for trees under 22 inch DBH. The Texas Forest Service Oak Wilt website implies one treatment should do the job.

Q. Is there any lawn grass seed I can plant now? My dog is tracking in mud from the sparse lawn in the backyard. I planted rye but it did not germinate well.

A. Rye is the only seed that will germinate now, and it will only last until June when the hot weather will kill it. It is very difficult to get any grass seed to germinate if the dog is turned loose on the area before it is well established. You also need to water twice per day until the seed germinates.

Bermuda grass will germinate if it is planted after April15. You may want to consider a temporary sod job. I say temporary because I fear that the dog will wear it out within a few months.