Question and Answer

November 19, 2015

Q. When you say incorporate 2 inches of compost into the garden, what exactly does that mean? Also, how do we calculate how much compost is required to provide 2 inches of compost?

A. Obtain enough compost from your compost pile or purchase enough from a horticultural supply company to cover the targeted garden area with a layer 2inches deep. Calculate the amount of compost needed in cubic yards by multiplying the square footage of the garden area times the 2 inches expressed as a part of a foot. One sixth of a foot (2inches) is approximately .17 feet. If the garden is 10 by 10 feet or 100 sq. ft., the amount of compost needed is 17 cu ft. (.17ft x100sq ft.). Since there is 27 cu ft. in a cu yd. (3 ft. by 3ft by 3ft), the 17 cu ft. is about two thirds of a cu yd. (17/27). Two thirds of a cu yd. is necessary to provide 2inches of compost over every 100sq ft. of garden.

The compost is incorporated into the garden soil by running a tiller over it or turning over the soil by a shovel after the compost has been spread 2 inches deep.

Q. We purchased “Pink Wave Petunias”. They are beautiful but my husband and I are debating how many transplants are required to fill a 16 inch container? How many would you recommend?

A. One petunia plant will easily grow to fill a 16 inch container. One plant would even be enough to fill a half whiskey barrel if you were patient enough to wait 6 weeks while it grew into the space.

Q. When should we relegate our fall tomato, pepper, eggplant, and okra plants to the compost pile? They are still producing some veggies but I want to make more room for broccoli, carrots, spinach onions, English peas, and lettuce.

A. They can be pulled anytime now. With the cool weather, production of the hot weather vegetables has fallen to low levels. Broccoli and the other cool weather vegetables will be more productive and will benefit by being planted as soon as possible.

Q. We have Mexican redbud on the edge of our shade trees but what other small, native trees can we plant to increase the bird population?

A Consider anaqua, Mexican plum, Texas persimmon, brasil (condalia), Mexican olive, and huisache. They are small to medium size native trees that provide cover and food for birds and other wildlife.

Q. We have a pretty good crop of bluebonnets every spring. What are some wildflowers that bloom earlier than bluebonnets that we can plant now?

A. Among the early blooming wildflowers are evening primrose, prairie verbena, and phlox. They are available in individual seed packages at some nurseries or you can buy them on the internet from Wildseed Farms or Native American Seed Company.