Q&A

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Q. Should we be worried that our live oak trees are dropping a number of their leaves?

A. No, leaf drop this summer is common and we are going to see even more as trees that put on heavy leaf loads in response to the generous rains received this winter and spring, adjust their foliar load to a level that can be supported in the current dry spell.

In addition to live oaks expect many shade trees to drop some of their leaves. We have already received reports of Texas red oaks, bur oaks, cedar elms, sycamore, mulberries, hackberries and pecans losing leaves. A special irrigation application won’t hurt them but it probably won’t be enough to prevent the leaf drop. Adjusting leaf load to match available soil moisture is a survival mechanism practiced by well adapted trees. The affected trees will recover.

Q. Just thought you would like to know that we were able to find the Roma Surprise and Surefire tomatoes you recommended for a fall tomato crop. I planted them and they have already tripled in size and have produced a few blooms. We definitely should be able to beat the cold weather and harvest vine-ripened tomatoes this fall!

A .Thanks for the report. I hope everyone is experiencing the same performance. Please keep me informed.

Q. The sunniest part of our St Augustine lawn has dried out. Is it dead? Is it a disease? What should we do to protect the rest of the lawn? Fertilize? Water?

A. I think your original diagnosis that the lawn is drying out is probably correct. The parts of the lawn with the shallowest or compacted soils dry out first. Apply about .75 in of irrigation each week should keep most of the lawn green. Hand water any dry areas that remain after the sprinkling.

Q. What are the best flowers for a cut flower garden in the summer?

A. In full sun consider zinnias, marigolds, and cosmos. The California Giants and Cactus zinnias have especially long stems. Plant them by seed. Dreamland zinnias are shorter but have a well-shaped flower with good colors. They are available as transplants. The large African hybrid marigolds are available as transplants. Plant cosmos by seed.

Q. What do we need to do to get our raised bed gardens ready for the winter garden? We want to grow carrots, broccoli lettuce, beets, and spinach.

A. Incorporate at least 2 inches of compost into the soil and add 5lbs of slow release lawn fertilizer over every 100 sq. ft. of bed in August prior to beginning your planting in September.