Question and Answer

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Q. Tell me about zoysia grass. We are going to need to put a lawn in our new home this spring and a friend reported that zoysia was one of the best choices for our area.

A. Zoysia grass forms a thick sod in full sun. It can tolerate a little bit of shade but not as much as St Augustine grass. It is a slow-growing, hard to mow turf that mows best with a reel mower. Because of its slow growth, it needs to be solid sodded. Zoysia grass has good traffic tolerance and can go dormant in droughts. To keep it green, zoysia requires as much irrigation as St Augustine grass. The thick bladed zoysias such as El Toro and Meyer are easier to mow than the thin bladed selections such as Emerald and Zeon. The thin-bladed selections, however, are very attractive.

Q. I planted my tomatoes in late February. Do you think it was too early? If so, what will happen?

A. Tomato transplants placed in the garden before the soil warms sufficiently will “harden off” and temporarily stop growing. As part of the symptom, the leaves will show some purple/maroon coloring. If the tomatoes harden –off it will delay the crop and reduce total production. It is better to pot-up tomatoes in one gallon containers filled with potting mix. Fertilize with Osmocote and place them in full sun. If temps are forecast to fall below 40F move them inside. Plant them in the garden after March 15.

Q. Some of our onions are turning yellow and looking faded. Any idea what it could be?

A. Onions require plenty of nitrogen to maintain their green color and grow large bulbs. Fertilize with a slow release lawn fertilizer such as 19-5-9. One cup spread alongside an eight foot row works well. The bulbs should reach full size by May 15. Make sure there is 6 inches space between plants. Use the onions in between for green onions.

Q. Is it still recommended that we plant milkweed to support the Monarch butterfly population?

A. Yes, the population fell in 2012/13 because of drought and cold weather. Other factors included illegal logging on the wintering sites and a lack of milkweed because of effective agricultural weed control. Milkweed is the only Monarch nesting site. Plant native milkweed if you can find seed or transplants. The tropical milkweed is a more attractive plant and is easier to find at nurseries. It also works.

Q. What herbicide can we use to kill bedstraw, henbit, chickweed and thistle in the lawn? What pre-emergent herbicide works best to prevent sand burs?

A. Fertilome Weed-Free Zone works well to control the winter broadleaf weeds. It functions in temperatures down to 40F and does not hurt the lawn grass. To prevent sand burs it is time to apply Amaze, Crabgrass Preventer, Halt, Dimension or XL.

Q. Our cyclamen and primula are looking great. How much longer will they last before we need to plant the summer flowers?

A. They will last through April and into May if temperatures stay mild and you keep them well-watered. Don’t forget to protect the primulas from slugs and snails with a bait renewed every 2 weeks.