Question and Answer

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* Q. We have several loquat (Japanese Plum) trees and all but one has great looking fruit on it. The fruit on the tree on question is brown and rotted. Is it a disease or is there another explanation?

1. The symptom you describe is the same we would expect if there had been a freeze. We had several days when temperatures fell near to freezing. Perhaps the tree you describe experienced some freezing temps? Another answer might be that the tree is just showing the remnants of the blooms and some self-pruning. I suppose it could be a fungus attack on the fruit of the one tree but that is not likely. See what happens as the season progresses.

* Q. I heard the interview on Milberger’s Gardening South Texas where Oak Wilt expert Mark Duff from the Texas Forest Service stated that the white oaks (bur, chinkapin, Mexican white, and lacey oak) were not completely resistant to the disease! How does that change our strategy to protect our trees from the disease?

1. It means that we need to use more cedar elms, Montezuma cypress, Mexican sycamore, and Chinese pistache in our shade tree plantings. Mark’s declaration of the susceptibility of white oaks to the disease was a shocker. It still appears that they are less susceptible but not as resistant as we believed.

* Q. Between bedstraw and beggar’s lice weeds my yard is overwhelmed. What are my options?

1. As bad as it looks, you do have several options. Mow the weeds in the lawn area or spray a 2-4-D product like “Fertilome Weed-Free Zone”. It works quickly and will not hurt the lawn grass. “Round-up” also works on the weeds that are apart from the lawn and other desirable plants. My next choice is to use your string mower to work in among the shrubs in the shrub border. A rake works well for bedstraw and you also may have to pull some of the weeds by hand.

To prevent the same situation next year, apply a pre-emergent herbicide about September 1. Make sure the target weeds are on the list on the label. Both bedstraw and beggar’s lice are cool weather weeds that will decline with the summer heat. Unfortunately beggar’s lice seeds will be ready to stick to your pet’s fur and feet all summer.

* Q. We had already planted our tomatoes when the 39 degree temperatures occurred. Will the plants be hurt? Will it delay our crop?

1. It is better if developing plants are not subjected to temperature below 40 degrees but it is too late now. We will just have to wait and see. The plants will lose some of their green color and may show some purple veining if they harden off because of the cool weather. Some gardeners in the Seguin-New Braunfels area were hit by hail. In some cases they will have to replace their plants.

* Q. What are the best zinnias for cut flowers? Are the Dreamland transplants available at my neighborhood nursery good for cut flowers?

1. The Dreamland selection has colorful well-formed flowers but the stems are shorter than is ideal for cut flowers. My favorite zinnias for cut flowers are California Giants and Cactus. They are very easy to grow by seed.