Gardening Question and Answer

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Q When can we plant broccoli and cauliflower? What else can we plant this fall?

A. Plant the cole crops (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprout, kohlrabi, and collards) transplants after September 15. You can also plant kale, Chinese cabbage, and chard transplants. Plant carrots, lettuce, turnips, radish, rutabaga, beets, and radish by seed. Later in the year English peas can also be planted (October).

Q. What is the small weed that returned after the rain with the yellow flowers? The deer seem to love it.

A. It sounds like you are describing horseherb which I think some gardeners call “straggler daisy”. It is a perennial plant that also reseeds. It is mowed and used as a lawn, especially in the winter when we get regular moisture. It temporarily disappears when it quits raining. You mention that it is a favorite deer browse, the black swallowtail butterflies also use the flowers as a nectar source. Horseherb is very difficult to control. It resists contact herbicides and since it is a perennial, preemergent herbicides do not affect the established plants.

Q. We have a live oak tree that is dropping leaves, branch ends and ball moss in the last 2 weeks. Some other trees in the area are doing the same but not to the extent that this tree is. What do you think is happening?

A. I believe it is a combination of factors. Many trees put an excess of leaves on their branches in response to the generous rains we experienced last winter and spring. There was also new stem growth on the end of branches loaded with a heavy set of leaves. They drop some of the leaves when the rains end and it gets hot. Time that leaf drop with the heavy rains and winds that we experienced in late August and leaves and branch ends fall to the ground. Ball moss clumps are always susceptible to wind and rain. This tree may also be especially susceptible to the direction of the winds that prevailed in the recent storms.

Q. Our fall tomatoes are doing very well. The Roma Surprise, Surefire and BHN 968 have all started to set fruit. I try to remember to give each plant about a quarter of a cup of lawn fertilizer every 3 weeks. Does it matter if it is slow-release or winterizer fertilizer? I have leftover slow release fertilizer from this summer and want to use it up.

A. Both of the fertilizers work well. Use up the open bag first.

Q. When the rains started I went ahead and fertilized the lawn. Now after reviewing one of your lawn care articles I realize I fertilized a month too early. What will that mean in terms of the lawn?

A. With the available moisture the nutrients will probably not be wasted as they might in more dry years but the early fertilization some summers will result in a flush of growth that may make the lawn less inclined to harden off and organize itself for cold weather. It will also mean that the nutrients will have less impact on a fast green-up in the spring.