

Gardening Question and Answer

Distribute 03-23-17

Q. What tomato variety will begin producing fruit quickest after it is planted?

A. In my experience the BHN 968 cherry tomato begins producing the quickest. The Roma tomatoes are also very fast.

Q. Is there any herbicide that we can apply to control the live oak sprouts? I thought you said that most acorns get eaten by birds and squirrels? I have hundreds sprouting under my trees!

A. I think if you check the sprouts will be suckers growing from the trees shallow roots rather than seedlings growing from acorns. The only way to control them is to mow them with your string mower or lawn mower. Because of their connection to the tree they cannot be treated with herbicides. Some trees produce many suckers and some don't produce any.

Q. Awhile back you reported that a wood pile if it is moist red oak is a threat to other oaks as a source of oak wilt spores. How do you deal with such a pile?

A. The best tactic is to wrap the pile in clear plastic. Seal it as tight as possible so the sap beetles can't get access to the fungal mat or if they get in they can't get out with spores attached. The plastic will also allow the wood inside to heat up and dry to make it less likely that a fungal mat will be produced. Leave the plastic in place until next winter.

Q. The snapdragons are beautiful but I want to start my zinnias in order to maximize nectar availability for butterflies. Is my only choice to pull the snaps?

A. That is one option but you may also be able to plant the zinnia seeds or place transplants in rows between the snapdragon rows. Utilize any space in the garden where the snaps are thin or remove a portion of them. Another option is to let them have the garden space through April. Butterflies and hummingbirds like snapdragons for nectar but you are right they do not match the appeal and production of zinnias. Find places in the landscape for mistflower, porter weed, and milkweed in addition to the zinnias to provide the most popular nectar sources.

Q. Is there anything that I can apply to the weeds in my raised bed garden before I plant tomatoes, cucumbers and green beans? They are grassy weeds (rescue grass?) and chickweed.

A. The labels won't let you apply contact herbicides such as round-up, grass-be-gone, or weed-free zone without a waiting period before vegetables are planted. One tactic may be to use a vinegar spray. It will only kill the tops of the weeds but that may get the job done this late in the cool weather weed season. Check out the label on the vinegar products, I believe there is a very short waiting period.