

Question and Answer Column

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Q. I was looking for ideas on deer proof plants on the plantanswers.com website and read one of your archived articles where you listed Sandankwa Viburnum, yaupon holly, primrose jasmine, Texas mountain laurel, thryallis and iris. The list was great but it made me wonder why nobody ever lists the native plant condalia?

A. Condalia (also called brasil) is an excellent wildlife plant because it produces berries all growing season and it has a dense thorny crown that birds use for nesting. The plant is fairly attractive as a specimen shrub or small tree but I think it is hard for producers to manage and sell because the inflexible, thorny branches.

Q. Will the rain and cool weather brought by Hurricane Harvey be enough to cause fall tomatoes to begin setting fruit?

A. Yes, some gardeners report that BHN 968 and HM1824 were already setting fruit in their gardens before the storms. For gardeners that have not yet planted their fall tomato transplants do your best to find the large transplants in one gallon containers. We are getting to the point in time where the tomatoes need to be setting fruit, if they are going to beat the cold temperatures.

Q. Our pecans and oaks are dropping lots of immature nuts and acorns. Is it because of the dry summer? Will they make a decent crop or will all of the nuts fail to fill out?

A. I think they will make a good crop despite some nut drop. Because of the great weather last year and this spring, pecans and oaks set lots of fruit. There still seems to be good amounts on the trees and the August 7 rains will help.

Q. It is amazing how quickly the lawns greened up after the August rains. Will it be enough to keep them green for the rest of the summer and fall? When can we fertilize again?

A. The rains in August greened up the lawns and also raised the aquifer levels so even if it warms up again we should be able to irrigate. Wait to fertilize until after September 15. Use a "winterizer" formula with a ratio of 3-1-2(18-6-12 is a good choice).

Q. When will the Monarch butterflies return? I notice that the milkweeds are in bloom again after a sparse period this summer.

A. I saw one Monarch last week but most should return for a short visit after mid-September and through October. They won't lay eggs on the milkweeds this fall but they will use them for nectar. They also seek out mist flower, zinnias, Mexican flame fine, tithonia, lantana, and duranta.