

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. The good news is that our bluebonnets sprouted! They are very thick. I was going to transplant some but my neighbor, who is a good gardener, says they don't transplant well. Should I just thin them out and discard the extra plants?

A. I think your two best choices are to let the seedlings grow up where they are, or you can transplant some if you have good places to plant them. They transplant fine, especially if you don't wait too long. The roots are developing. Naturalized bluebonnet patches often develop with the plants growing close together. They do not need to be thinned.

Q. I harvested my first carrots last week. They were great. How long do I dare leave them in the ground before the quality will deteriorate?

A. If the weather stays relatively cool, they can be stored in the garden into May. Use the current crop as you need them in that interval of time. You can also plant a new crop now, if you need more in late spring.

Q. I am pruning my roses and have found some borers in the stem. Should I spray an insecticide?

A. Several gardeners have found cane borers in their roses. Cut the penetrated stem off down to a solid portion and then apply a small dollop of Elmer's glue to the fresh cut to prevent entry by another borer. For plants and beds where the borers are common, apply the glue to all cuts.

Q. Based on the good luck I have had with growing cemetery iris amid deer, I planted a large new bed of blue iris. They were doing well but I notice that now after the freezes, the deer are browsing the foliage. Please don't tell me that iris have suddenly become a deer favorite? They aren't pulling the rhizomes out and are only eating a portion of the stem. Meanwhile they have not touched the old cemetery iris bed. Any advice or ideas?

A. It is a good sign that they are not eating the iris in the old bed. I think that out of curiosity and to take advantage of the growth stimulated by heavy fertilization at the nursery, the deer are tasting the iris. It is very common for new transplants from the nursery to be eaten by deer. The lush growth seems to have a reduced level of the chemicals that deter deer. You may want to spray them every week for 4 weeks with Liquid Fence or another deer repellent to reduce the inclination.

Q. We planted 4 peach trees last year and realize they need to be pruned but don't know where to start.

A. February is the best fruit tree pruning month. The idea is to open the middle and space the fruit bearing new wood (red, from last year). For more detailed guidance and diagrams, visit plantanswers.com.