

Gardening Question and Answer

Distribute 02-19-2018

Q. My lawn is finally greening up. Can I go ahead and fertilize now?

A. Some St Augustine and even Bermuda grass is beginning to grow but it is likely that most of the lush green growth you see is from rescue grass or annual bluegrass, 2 winter grass weeds. They were slow to grow because of the cold weather in January. It is more efficient and environmentally appropriate to wait to fertilize the lawn until late April or May 1.

The best action for the lawn right now is to aerate and top dress. Hire a contractor to do the job or rent an aerator from home Depot or an equipment rental shop. The aerator cuts plugs into the sod and then deposits them on the lawn surface. The channels created relieve compaction and allow water and air to penetrate. Apply one-half inch of compost to the aerated lawn and the organic material reaches the grass roots. Obtain the compost from an organic material supplier.

Q. Redbuds in my area are blooming and it looks like the Texas mountain laurel will be blooming soon. What are some other small trees that work well in a landscape?

A. Crape myrtles are available in many bloom colors and sizes. Select the size to fit the available space. Mexican plum is another excellent choice. It grows to about 12 feet tall with spring blooms and early summer fruit for the birds. It has some shade tolerance. Another tree with shade tolerance is the evergreen loquat (Japanese plum). It grows to 30 feet tall. Mexican olive has beautiful white blooms through much of the summer and grows to 25 feet tall.

Q. What is the deal on spraying peaches? Last year some of the early varieties had fruit but the peaches were scarred by leaf-footed bugs. All our trees look like they will bloom and have fruit this year. There was plenty of chill hours. How do I protect the fruit?

A. The normal spray program is to alternate between malathion and carbaryl (Sevin) each week to control the leaf-footed bugs and other insects. Include Captan in the spray to control fungus diseases. Organic gardeners can try the weekly sprays with one of the organic insecticides such as pyrethrin. Some of the sprays have neem oil included for fungus diseases. Follow label instructions on all pesticides.

Q. When can we plant zinnias for the spring? We love them for the color, the cut flowers and to provide nectar for the butterflies and humming birds.

A. If the weather warms up seeds may germinate in mid-March. Transplants may also be available in mid- March or early April. The cool weather annuals such as snapdragons, dianthus, calendula, pansies, cyclamen and primula will bloom into May. Some nurseries still have transplants in full bloom.