

## Gardening Q&A

Distribute 08-06-2018

Q. We have a new house and are trying to decide on which lawn grass to use. We planted some small shade trees, but it is basically in full sun. The soil is relatively deep, and it appears to be fertile. We are planning to incorporate 2 inches of compost into the soil. Our landscape contractor says it will be easier to grow Bermuda grass, but we prefer El Toro Zoysia. What do you think?

A. To keep zoysia green requires more water than Bermuda but zoysia is very attractive and it sounds like you have adequate soil conditions. Zoysia mows better with a reel mower but your rotary mower will work if you keep it sharp and mow on a regular schedule even if it does not grow much. Zoysia, like Bermuda, can be allowed to go dormant if water is unavailable in a drought. It will recover when the rains return. I had a zoysia lawn and think you will like it as much as I liked mine.

Q. Is there any insecticide that works well for stink bugs? They are attacking my oriental persimmons and peppers. I tried Spinosad and soapy water without any success.

A. Some nurseries still have some Sevin left on their shelves. The spray works for stink bugs. If you can't find Sevin use malathion. It should do the job. Follow label instructions.

Q. We have had excellent cut flowers and butterfly traffic from our Dreamland zinnias, but they are declining now. You have described the desirability of allowing them to drop their seed and producing a new crop of flowers. How would we do that?

A. Collect the brown flower heads and pull them apart to drop the seed on the open soil that is created when you pull the spent plants. Moisten the bare soil with the seeds spread on it every day. The new plants should germinate within a week. The flowers that grow from Dreamland seeds will have quite a large variation in flower shape and height. They won't be as attractive as Dreamland hybrid blooms, but the butterflies and hummingbirds will love them.

Q. We found some tomato plants for our fall garden- Tycoon, 602, Roma, and Phoenix. How much space should we allow between each plant? How often should we have to water them?

A. Plant 3 tomatoes in an eight-foot row with at least 2 feet between rows. You will have to water every day until the temperatures become more mild and the plants develop their root system.

Q. We love the results we obtained from our 'Whopper' begonias but now between the plant growth, wind, rain and some squirrels, the plants are large and ragged. Can we prune them, or do we need to start over with new plants?

A. Prune them back to about half size, they should tidy themselves up by sending out new foliage. Help them out by fertilizing the plants. Use Osmocote if they are in containers or use slow release lawn fertilizer (19-5-9) if they are in a bed.