

## Gardening Q& A

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Q. I planted some dwarf hollies back in February. They were doing fine until one started drooping leaves. I read up on care for them and thought I was overwatering, so I cut back to two or three times/week. Now all six are dropping leaves and look sad. Any suggestions?

A. The symptoms are similar for over and under watering. Based on the weather I would be inclined to think you are under-watering but based on the frequency, it sounds like overwatering. One way to check is to dig into the edge of the root ball. I suspect that it will be very dry. Ifs, water less frequently (once or twice/week) but water generously at the base of the plant to be sure that the root system is receiving moisture.

Q. This summer we have been watering our peach trees generously to encourage good production next spring. The water has improved the growth of the peach trees but also encouraged the growth of nutsedge. It is growing 12 inches tall. What are my control options? Can I use Image or Sedgehammer?

A. Hand pulling the large nutsedge plants from a moist soil is not as difficult as we think. The weeding does not have to get every single plant, bulbs and all. I am often content with just string mowing the nutsedge down. Be careful not to injure the trunk of the trees. The labels for Image and Sedgehammer Plus do not allow the application of the products to control nutsedge in their vicinity.

Q. We want to plant some large shrubs and small trees on our property that will provide food for the birds all year long. Can you provide a list?

A. Mulberry, Anaqua, Japanese Ligustrum, Texas Persimmon, Hackberry, Mexican Plum, Live oak, Blackberries, and Firethorn are consistent and bountiful producers. Note that Mulberry, Hackberry, and Ligustrum are invasive.

Q. What is the recommended time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to the lawn? When should we fertilize this fall?

A. The pre-emergent herbicides need to be applied between Aug 15 and September 15 to do a good job of preventing germination of the winter weed. Fertilize with a winterizer fertilizer with a 3-1-2 nutrient ratio on or about October 1 (18-6-12, and 15-5-10 are examples)

Q. How long will the zinnias keep blooming? When can we plant snapdragons and stocks?

A. Zinnias will bloom until freezing temps arrive, usually about Thanks giving. The cool weather annuals can be planted in October.

Q. I am experiencing a large leaf fall from a Monterrey oak that was planted along our driveway 19 years ago. It went through the same process last year but never before that. There is no irrigation. Any ideas? Is it a natural phenomenon at this time of the year for this type of tree?

A. Yes, the evergreen Monterrey oak will drop part or all its leaves when subjected to extreme heat and/or dry soil. If the soil reservoir is limited because of rock or physical barriers, the tree could become more likely to drop leaves as the crown gets larger but it should survive.