

Gardening Q&A

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Q. You and Dr Parson's talk a lot about horse herb as a groundcover and wildlife plant on your Gardening South Texas radio show. Is there a source of seed or transplants that you can pass on?

A. Milbergers and other nurseries sometimes have transplants in the San Antonio area. Check with your local nursery. Based on the information on the internet, seeds are not available. I called Douglas King Seed Co, Native American Seed and the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, and they confirmed that no one they knew had been able to collect the seed.

Q. I want to alert fellow gardeners that the cabbage loopers are already actively feeding on the broccoli and kale I planted last week for the winter garden. I prepared the planting bed with compost and slow release lawn fertilizer and planted my transplants but unfortunately, I was busy at the office and with all the rain, I did not give the new plants any attention. When I finally checked on them they were chewed bare by cabbage loopers. I decided it was best just to get new transplants and this time I sprayed them with Bt!

A. Yes, if you plant cole crops you can expect cabbage loopers. At first sign of any feeding on the foliage spray the foliage with a Bt product like Bio Worm Control, Thuricide, or Dipel.

Q. Our esperanza is blooming well but our pride of Barbados has quit blooming. The foliage looks great and there are seed pods. Should we have fertilized or watered more? How about cutting off the seeds?

A. Deadheading the seedpods works to increase bloom from esperanza but it is believed that it does not influence pride of Barbados, also called poinciana. Bloom period of poinciana is apparently affected by daylength and may be already ending its bloom period for the season. Fertilizer and extra water do not improve bloom and in some cases reduce the bloom on poinciana. Often reducing watering and stopping adding fertilizer is necessary to kick the plants into bloom.

Q. The milkweed and mistflowers in our landscape are blooming and are ready for the arrival of the Monarchs, when should we expect them? On another front the ruby-throated hummingbirds have started to show up at our sugar-water feeders. Fall must be here!

A. The Queens should be visiting your plants in large numbers now and some gardeners have had visits from Monarchs already. I would expect most of the Monarch action, however, in October. Yes, there have been other reports of ruby-throats moving through. There was one gardener that also thinks that a rufous hummingbird visited his feeder!

Q. What does it mean when my Oscar okra never got any taller than 3 feet? It produced some pods but now seems to be ending production.

A. I would suspect nematodes. Are some of the plants beginning to lose their leaves as well? Okra gradually ends production as the weather cools, but it should continue for another month at least. The small size is also a symptom of nematodes. Pull them up and if our suspicions are realized make sure you dispose of the infected root systems in the garbage, not in the compost pile. You can combat nematodes by growing a crop of cereal rye in the infected area (visit plantanswers.com for detailed instructions) In the future grow sweet corn, onions and resistant tomatoes such as Celebrity, Tycoon, BHN 968, and Valley Girl on that portion of the garden.