

Gardening Q&A

Distribute 03-23-2019

Q. What is the value of grafted tomatoes that are being offered at some nurseries? Are yields larger or are there advantages for accomodating bad soils?

A. I don't see a clear advantage beyond the ability to use a nematode resistant rootstock for one of the many modern varieties that are not nematode resistant. They are relatively expensive but it may be interesting to try a few and see if there are any obvious differences.

Q. When will we know if the peaches that were blooming during the last freeze will drop all their fruit? It is emotionally draining to think that my wonderful Florida King tree that has all of the good looking peaches on it may suddenly drop them due to the internal freeze damage.

A. We have had reports that some peaches and plums in North Texas that were blooming have lost all of their fruit, but some still look like they will survive. We just have to wait for the unknown decisive point. It is recommended that the spray program be instituted just in case the fruit will survive. Use malathion or Sevin for insects and Captan for fungus every week. Organic gardeners can try pyrethrins for insects and neem oil or sulfur for a preventative fungicide.

Q. Our lawn was dominated by recue grass this winter. It is now declining, what do you think about going ahead and aerating and top dressing the lawn? The rescue grass will still be there but we can mow it low so it wont interfere much with the aeration and top dressing?

A. I think that your plan is a good idea. The lawn grass is beginning its growth for the year and will benefit greatly by the aeration and top dressing.

Q. How much longer will our snapdragons and cyclamen be providing high quality blooms? Is it necessary to fertilize the plants again before they decline?

A. We should get another 4 to 6 weeks of attractive blooms before the plants decline in the heat. A light fertilization would be beneficial but not absolutely necessary. The nutrients won't be wasted, the hot weather color (zinnias, petunias, cosmos,etc.) you plant will use what ever remains in the soil.

Q. Like everyone else we mow back our live oak suckers several times per growing season, but I don't understand why the process does not open up the trees to attack by the sap beetles that carry the disease spores to fresh wounds on susceptible trees. Do you have any evidence that it is not a potential opening for the disease?

A. I have been at several seminars conducted by oak wilt experts from Texas A&M Texas Forest Service where I believe that they reported that the mowing is not an opening to the disease because the wounds on the suckers are so small that the trees defenses that block the entry of the spores are able to

immediately provide protection. I admit that this statement is not as complete or reassuring as we would like. I will see if I can obtain a more definitive explanation of the mechanism involved.