

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. I spray dormant oil on my peach tree in the winter and use malathion when the fruit is ripening but this year the tree is exuding some type of sap from holes along the trunk. Do you know what it is and what should I do to control it, if it is a problem?

A. Unfortunately, I believe the symptom you are describing is caused by bacterial canker. The disease is notorious for attacking stone fruit if it is stressed by drought or any other reason. There is no cure for the disease. You must let it run its course and hope the tree survives another 4 or 5 years. The tree usually dies branch by branch. Cut out the dead wood as long as it is possible.

Q. Last year you convinced me to plant porter weed for a nectar source for butterflies and hummingbirds. We loved it but the plants froze this winter and my nursery says it is impossible to find a wholesale source this year because of the popularity! Will it be available later in the summer?

A. I suspect that it will be like last year when the less desirable varieties such as coral and medical porter weed will be available soon, but the dwarf red and purple will only be available later in the summer.

Q. We have a pair of robins building a nest in our neighborhood. Is that unusual?

A. It is unusual, but we have been receiving such reports for 3 or 4 years now. The usual result is that the nest is abandoned when the weather gets hot in May. The robins can find worms and other food sources if the weather is moist and mild, but it is difficult for them when the weather heats up. Keep us informed!

Q. Is it too late to plant tatuma as a replacement for summer squash? One of the members of our garden club offered me some seed. He and I are having trouble with the squash vine borer on our summer squash. He ordered some tatuma seed on the internet because you said it tastes the same as summer squash and is resistant to the borers.

A. Yes, go ahead and plant the tatuma squash. The plants are very productive and resist the squash vine borer. Harvest the fruit when it is softball size.

Q. We have leaf-footed bugs on our tomatoes. I know that Sevin has been pulled off the market, but our nurseryman says we can still purchase and use product that is on the shelves of area nurseries? Is that true?

Yes, that is my understanding. Leaf-footed bugs and other stinkbugs are difficult to control. In my experience carbaryl (Sevin) and malathion are the insecticides that work the best. Use one of the 2 products on tomatoes, peaches, blackberries and other fruit infested with the pests. Follow label instructions.