

## Gardening Q&A

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Q. Our blackberries are turning ripe, but they are infested with “bitter bugs” that leave a foul taste on the fruit. What will kill them? Is it too late to control them?

A. Sevin and malathion will control them. They are similar to the stink bugs that infest tomatoes and peaches. It is too late if most of the blackberries have already ripened. Follow label instructions on the insecticide.

Q. We sent you photos of 2 weeds in our St Augustine lawn. What are they, and how can we control them?

A. The weeds are dollar weed (shiny round leaves) and horseherb (small yellow flowers). They are perennials so a pre-emergent herbicide will not work to control them. They are both weeds that prosper in sparse lawns that usually are bordering on too much shade. Try Fertilome “Weed Free Zone” or another contact herbicide for broadleaf weeds. It also helps to mow your St Augustine grass relatively high at 3.5 inches. Have you fertilized this spring? Use a slow release lawn fertilizer such as 19-5-9.

Q. At one time you listed some ways to keep squirrels from eating all the bird seed at the feeder. Can you please restate those tactics for us? The squirrels are eating everything!

A. Start by using a steel feeder with a weight sensitive perch. They close feed access when a squirrel or white winged dove lands on the perch. The Absolute brand is one that works very well. Replace sunflower seeds with safflower seed. Birds like both but squirrels don't like the safflower seed. Use pepper flavored suet and seed. Squirrels pass it up.

Q. We have 5 live oak trees with 2 of them producing many root sprouts. Is there a better way to remove them than by mowing? Would a vinegar spray do the job? It does not translocate to the root system like Round-up so it should not hurt the parent tree.

A. You could experiment, but I predict that the vinegar would not eliminate the waxy leafed oak sucker, but it would burn back any lawn grass in the vicinity. Mowing seems to be the best solution

Q. Is the Whopper begonia as drought tolerant as the regular semperfloren begonia? The leaves and flowers are so large, it looks like it would dry out or scorch?

A. In my experience the Whopper begonia is just as drought tolerant as its semperfloren cousins. They also have the same capability to resprout in the spring after being frozen back to the soil level.

Q. There is a 16 ft. tree with a rounded crown that has a white flower. The leaves are oval, and the flowers are star shaped with a yellow middle. The flowers are about silver dollar size. Do you know what it is?

A. Based on your description it sounds like Mexican olive, *Cordia boissieri*. It is generally winter hardy in San Antonio but is not reliable north of the area. It produces a round olive like fruit that some birds and wildlife will eat. Watch for transplants for sale at native plant sales.