

## Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. What are some perennials we can plant in the shade under our oaks, hackberries and other shade trees? We need some plants that are attractive, easy to care for, and cover lots of ground. We basically need tall ground covers with shade tolerance.

A. When I think of tall groundcovers with shade tolerance, shrimp plant, blue plumbago, and Turks cap come to mind. Shrimp plant grows to about 3 feet tall and is available with rust color or golden blooms. Blue plumbago is less upright growing than the Turk's Cap or shrimp plant but can cover lots of ground with blue and also white blooms. The native Turks cap has small red blooms that are favorites of hummingbirds. It grows to about 3 feet tall. The three plants listed are not the favorite of the deer but will be eaten in a drought.

Q. We treated our blackberries with malathion to control the stink bugs. It worked as far as eliminating the stink bugs but how long must we wait before we can eat the berries after spraying?

A. You need to follow the guidelines described on the label of the pesticide you used. In the case of malathion, it may be as short as 3 days or as long as 7 days. It is also important to wash the fruit before use. If you spray fruit just before it is due to ripen it can be a problem because the quality declines if it is overripe and or other berry predators like the birds have a longer time to access the fruit.

Q. We like the look of zoysia grass for our new home but are hesitant to buy a reel mower. Is it required that you have a reel mower if you have a zoysia lawn?

A. It works best if you have a reel mower for zoysia grass, but it is not absolutely necessary. The reel mower accomplishes the mowing with more cutting and less ripping than a rotary mower. A rotary mower works all right if you keep the blade sharp and mow every week. Zoysia grass blades are tough and harder to mow than St Augustine grass.

Q. Do slugs and snails eat zinnias? The Dreamland transplants that I placed in our garden are being eaten by something. We haven't seen any of the pests yet but how can we check? If it is snails, how do we treat them? Is slug and snail bait a threat to our terriers? I hate to use pesticides!

A. You can usually see slugs and snails feeding if you go out with a flashlight after dark. I have used slug and snail bait for many years and have always had dogs, including terriers, as far as I can tell the snail bait has never hurt any of the dogs. Follow label instructions on the Snail bait and all pesticides.

Q. We have half a bag of "winterizer" fertilizer left from this fall, can we use it for fertilizing the flowers and vegetables in our garden this summer?

A. Yes, you can use leftover “winterizer” fertilizer for the lawn or garden this summer. The “winterizer” fertilizer releases all its nitrogen when the material is applied. The slow-release lawn fertilizer releases half immediately and the other half over 3 months. For most efficiency use the “winterizer” fertilizer to provide nutrients for quick maturing, short season plants.