

## Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. Both my zoysia grass and my asparagus are dying in this heat. Is it just the heat or lack of water, or is there some disease involved? I don't see any insects. I don't want to have to replace the lawn. Have you got any advice for me?

A. Neither the asparagus nor the zoysia grass will die from the heat. Asparagus usually goes dormant for a period in the summer and then greens up again in the fall. Zoysia grass also has the ability to go dormant during a dry period. To keep it green it requires at least one-half inch irrigation each week. Even then some areas where there is compacted, or shallow soil will brown during hot weather. Less water and the zoysia will turn brown until the mild temps and rains resume. Both zoysia and asparagus are drought tolerant.

Q. Our St Augustine grass is browning along the driveway, the hottest part of the lawn. My neighbor recommended that we treat for chinch bugs. He says they are prevalent now in the hottest part of the lawn. Is he correct?

A. Yes, the browning could be caused by chinch bugs but even more common is the grass in the hottest part of the lawn browning from a shortage of water in relation to the soil depth and the evaporation rate. Check it out by hand-watering all or a portion of the browned area every day for a week. If it is a water deficit, the hand watering will green it up. If it doesn't respond to the hand watering, treat with a soil insecticide for chinch bugs.

Q. When can we plant fall tomatoes? It just seems too hot for them to prosper but we don't dare wait too long, do we?

A. No don't wait any longer, in fact if you plant now, you need to use transplants in one-gallon containers. The second half of July is the recommended time to plant fall tomatoes in Central Texas. The plants spend the time growing a root system and are ready to move quickly to set fruit when the temps moderate.

Q. Our native milkweed has already quit blooming. What will the Monarchs use for nectar and egg-laying when they show up next month?

A. The Monarchs aren't expected to lay eggs in the fall on their way to the wintering grounds in Mexico. They visit our landscapes to fill up with nectar from mist flower, zinnias, Mexican flame vine, lantanas, fall aster, salvias, mint marigold, and duranta. Tropical milkweed will often continue to bloom into the fall with a lush foliage and sometimes the Monarchs lay a late clutch of eggs. There continues to be a debate whether fall egg-laying is desirable. Some gardeners prune the tropical milkweed back next month to the ground to discourage the late caterpillar production. For more information seek out my

archived articles on the topic in [plantanswers.com](http://plantanswers.com). There is also lots of information of the plight of Monarchs and milkweed on the internet.

Q. What peach variety do you recommend for a backyard tree in our area?

A. After several years of excellent production even with limited cold weather in the winter, my favorite selection has become Florida King.