

Gardening Q& A

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Q. We have a bougainvillea that has been growing in our courtyard for almost 10 years. It is in the sun from noon until 6 PM each day. It quit blooming about 5 years ago. Have you any idea how we can get it to start blooming again?

A. There are several reasons why bougainvillea do not bloom. 1). Is it growing in the shade? I know you said it is in the sun in the afternoon for 6 hours. Six hours is borderline sun and I have found that gardeners are often imaginative when we describe the setting as in full sun! To be in full sun the sun must reach the plant. It does not count to be in full sun just because you can see the sun from the vicinity of the plant. 2). Is the bougainvillea rootbound? It should be. To bloom well it must not be growing lots of new foliage. You can tip the stem ends to stimulate side sprouts, but severe pruning stimulates excessive foliage growth and prevents bloom. The growth of new foliage because the top is frozen back each winter will also reduce or even eliminate bloom. 3) Are you over-watering the plant? Bougainvillea needs to dry out between waterings. Let the soil dry to one inch before you irrigate again.

Q. What good are acorns? They make a mess and get in my dog's paws. Is there any way to prevent acorn production in live oaks and Texas red oaks?

A. I have not heard of any management practice or herbicide that prevents acorn production. Of course, the acorns are the way oaks reproduce in forests. In our yards, many of us value the acorns because they are an important food for birds and other wildlife. To see the doves, blue jays, and other birds feed on the acorns makes it worth the effort to remove a few acorn shells from the dog's paws!

Q. How much water would we have to apply to our St Augustine lawn to keep it green? What if we had zoysia grass?

A. The SAWS lawn watering recommendation on the internet generally is recommending .75 inches of water per week during this hot dry spell. In my experience that is a good recommendation, especially if you have at least 4 inches of soil under the lawn. Six inches of soil is better. The same amount of water will keep zoysia green. To receive the landscape email from SAWS (San Antonio Water System) that includes the weekly irrigation recommendation sign up on their website GardenStyleSA.com. They base the recommendation on the weather data. You do not have to be a SAWS customer to receive the email.

Q. When can we plant broccoli in our vegetable gardens?

A. Plant winter vegetables in September as soon as the nighttime temperatures drop into the low 70s.

Q. Is it time to apply pre-emergent herbicides to prevent the winter weeds? Does this hot weather affect the timing?

A. Yes, apply a pre-emergent herbicide such as Amaze or Dimension as close to September 1 as possible. The hot weather delays the winter weed germination, but they will begin growing as soon as the temps cool and the preemergent herbicide should be in place before then.