

Gardening Q&A

10-14-2019

Q. The firebush that we have in a container on our patio for the hummingbirds is loaded with aphids. There are so many that the leaves and blooms are deformed. Is there anything we can spray with to control the aphids that won't hurt the hummingbirds?

A. A dilute soap spray should work on the aphids without being a threat to the hummingbirds. Try a teaspoon of dish detergent in 2 cups of water.

Q. We are preparing our cut flower garden to convert it from zinnias to snapdragons. There are an amazing number of grubs in the soil. Is there anything we should apply to kill the grubs?

A. Toss the grubs you find onto the lawn adjacent to the garden. The mockingbirds that follow you around when you work in the garden will consume the grubs you find. It is not effective to apply a soil insecticide now when the grubs have finished their feeding for the season. If there is evidence that they are damaging the flower roots. Make a note on your calendar to apply a soil insecticide about June 1. If there are fewer than 3 per sq. ft. of soil surface, they are probably not doing significant damage.

Q. Our favorite nursery is offering a s number of the recommended fruit trees this fall. Is it okay to obtain and plant them now, or should we wait until spring like usual?

A. Fall is the best time to plant all hardy trees and shrubs. If you plant avocados, Meyers lemon, and Mexican lime you will have to be prepared to protect them from the cold but species like peaches, apples, satsumas, and pears should benefit by being planted in the fall. They can develop a root system before they must face the challenge of a Central Texas summer.

Q. When is the recommended time to plant spinach, potatoes and onions. I know it is sometime this winter but not right now like the broccoli, carrots and kale.

A. Plant spinach transplants in November, onion transplants in December and potatoes about February 1. We also wait to plant pansies, cyclamen, and primula in the flower garden until November. Like the spinach they are sensitive to hot spells that often occur in October.

Q. Do you recommend we go ahead and apply a herbicide for winter weeds even though it is later than the normal time to apply it? The weeds don't seem to be sprouting yet!

A. It is a gamble to apply preemergent herbicides this late. You may prevent the germination of some weeds but a good number will germinate before the herbicide has had time to form its barrier.