

Gardening Q&A

10-21-2019

Q. Our sandankwa viburnum has some brown foliage from the hot dry weather. Should we cut the brown leaves off?

A. I generally just let them drop off the stems. Are the plants receiving more water now? Once the decline begins, they could lose more foliage. Water them at the base every week until the rains start.

Q. Last week I heard you have a discussion with a listener to your radio show about Monarch butterflies. He seemed to be pursuing the idea that the Monarchs were only interested in the tropical milkweeds in Central Texas because they needed to lay eggs on the foliage. You seemed to be promoting the argument that in the fall the Monarchs were more interested in obtaining nectar from the milkweeds than laying eggs? Is my interpretation of the discussion correct?

A. Yes, you got it right. It was unfortunate that the show was over before we could clarify our points further. Monarchs lay some eggs in the fall in our area, but our gardens serve mostly as a nectar source for migrating adults. Zinnias, mist flower, porterweed, lantana, Mexican flame vine, duranta and other plants also provide nectar for the migrants. As I mentioned in the radio discussion quite often the caterpillars produced in the fall on milkweed in our gardens are Queen larvae. It is more likely that Monarchs will lay eggs in our area in the late spring as they move North.

Q. We have had our broccoli transplants in place for nearly a month without experiencing cabbage loopers. Is that unusual? Should we spray a preventive application?

A. Yes, it is unusual that you have not seen any loopers yet but just continue watching for them. Bt products do not make good preventive sprays. They work best when applied immediately when you discover presence of the pests.

Q. We are moving to a new house in a few months, but we must move out of our current home right away. We love our iris plantings and the friends buying our current house say we can thin out the beds and take some iris with us. Is it a problem if we dig up the rhizomes but can't replant them for several months?

A. No, Iris rhizomes are tolerant of sitting in a paper sack waiting to be replanted for at least 6 months. If possible, store them in an airconditioned storage room but I have had them perform well even when stored in a non-temperature-controlled shed.

Q. When can we plant sweet pea seeds?

A. As an experiment I planted some in mid-October but generally mid-November works well. Most years the seed dropped from the previous year will germinate after November 1. That is a good indication when the seeds from new supplies can be expected to prosper.

Q. When should peach trees be sprayed with copper hydroxide (Kocide) to reduce bacterial diseases?

A. November 1 is the usual target date to spray stone fruit with copper hydroxide.