

Gardening Q&A

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Q. I planted carrot seed that was new from the nursery this year. None of it grew. Should the nursery be willing to replace it?

A. The usual issue is that carrot and other small seed gets planted too deep. The problem is probably not a question of poor seed from the nursery. Try reseeding but do not bury the seed, just lay it on the prepared moist soil. Did you have success with lettuce? Lettuce is even more demanding about needing light to germinate than carrots. Do not cover it with soil either.

Q Our zinnias are showing some freeze burn, but the blooms and foliage are largely intact. Should I go ahead and pull them up to make room for snapdragons or stock?

A. Zinnias are a favorite nectar source for butterflies and other pollinators, you can leave them in place until a major freeze occurs. It is not unusual for the mild weather to last well into December. This is always a tough decision for me at this time of the year. If cut flowers are your primary goal, replace the zinnias.

Q. Is it time to plant English peas? What about spinach, potatoes and onions?

A. Plant English peas by seed after soaking the seed in water overnight. Use tomato cages for trellises if you don't have regular trellises. Wait until Feb 1 to plant potatoes. The end of December is a good time to plant onion transplants. Go ahead and plant spinach transplants every foot or 18 inches in the row.

Q. We use primula for color in the shade during the winter. How much should we fertilize them? They are in containers, will slugs and snails be a problem?

A. Fertilize primula (primrose) in containers with Osmocote at planting. They also respond well to a soluble fertilizer like Miracle Gro dissolved in the irrigation water at least once per month. Yes, slugs and snails are a problem even in containers. Apply a slug and snail bait and renew it every month.

Q. We want to plant a new shade tree in our yard. Your discussion with Dr Parsons on the radio show Milberger's Gardening South Texas about Chinese Pistache intrigued us. Is it a good choice for a shade tree in this area?

A. I have a Chinese Pistache that has been planted for about 15 years. It has an attractive round crown shape and showy fall leaf color. The birds love the berries that it produces each year. Dr Parsons says one growing in his neighborhood in San Antonio produces unwanted seedlings. My tree so far has not

produced any seedlings. Chinese Pistache is a popular shade tree with most gardeners that have planted it.