

## Gardening Q&A

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Q. Are there any cool weather annuals that the deer won't eat?

A. Some deer proof lists show snapdragons, calendula, and cyclamen as cool weather annuals that the deer won't eat. Unfortunately, other gardeners report that deer will eat cyclamen blooms. In my neighborhood the deer did not eat the snaps that I put out as a test several years ago, but they did break off the stems as they wandered through the planting area. I have not tested calendula. If you try any of the plants spray them with Liquid Fence to discourage the deer from pulling them up out of curiosity.

Q. We were traveling to a neighboring town during the Thanksgiving weekend and saw a number of small trees that had colorful leaves. Any idea what plant they might be?

A. Some of the red, pink and lavender flowered crape myrtles have colorful fall leaves. Flameleaf sumac has colorful (usually reddish). Chinese pistache and big-tooth maple also have colorful leaves.

Q. What do cabbage looper butterflies look like? I thought they had plain white wings but there are butterflies with a white wing but with a black pattern on it. Do you think they are cabbage butterflies?

A. It sounds like they maybe a checkered white rather than a cabbage white. According to my butterfly guidebook the checkered whites are common on flowers now collecting nectar and they have more of a pattern on the wings, especially the females.

Q. We planted kale, chard and collards this fall. They are all doing well, and we want to start harvesting the foliage. How much can we remove each harvest and still have them maintain themselves?

A. There are several factors that contribute to foliar production. Fertilization is important. Side dressing with "winterizer" fertilizer every 3 weeks will help keep production high. The plants also need to be growing in the sun, have sufficient irrigation, and be protected from cabbage loopers. I think it is reasonable to harvest one third of the foliage every 3 weeks if you fertilize.

Q. When will the satsumas be ripe? Our fruit is large but still mostly green.

A. Satsumas and other citrus can be ripe enough to use even if they still are mostly green. If you are anxious to use some of the fruit harvest one to see if it has a good flavor. It is early December so they could be physiologically ripe even with a green color. It really becomes an issue when we are facing another freeze. You don't want the fruit to freeze on the tree.

