

## Gardening Q&A

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Q. Our snapdragons look beautiful except they are surrounded by two types of weeds. One has a scalloped round leaf with a purple flower, and one has a small mouse ear leaf and white flowers. I don't know if they will grow over the top of the Sonnet snapdragons, but they shade the foliage. Is there any easy way to control them? Are they a problem?

A. The weeds you are describing sound like henbit and chickweed. They are a problem even if they don't grow over the snapdragons. They compete for water and nutrients like all weeds plus they become very dense and cause decline of the embedded snapdragon foliage. The foliage stays damp and decomposes. The easiest way to eliminate the two weeds named is to apply a preemergent to the bed in late August. Since you plant your snaps and most winter annuals by transplant, a preemergent like Amaze or Dimension should work. Preemergents prevent seeds from germinating. Follow the label instructions. At this point hand pulling the weeds is the only option. Henbit and chickweed are thick, but they are relatively easy to pull by hand.

Q. We have a century plant that has a unique bloom configuration. Please come visit and verify its uniqueness. Call the provided phone number before you visit.

A. I don't generally make house visits. If you can't send a picture in an email, the best bet to have someone visit your landscape is to contact your county AgriLife Extension Service office and describe the issue.

Q. One of our neighbors had their live oak tree pruned last month. They did not paint the wounds. I suggested that they should, and the contractor said you did not need to in the winter. I fussed at them because you and most horticulturists say it is best to paint the wounds immediately after the cuts are made year around. What are my options?

A. The trees are less likely to become infected with oak wilt during the hottest part of summer and the coldest part of winter, but it is safest to paint the wounds all year around. If they were pruning in November, it is one of the months when temperatures are mild, and the disease is most likely to spread. Check if your county or city has a painting ordinance and report the contractor. You can also let your Extension agent know. They may be willing to contact the contractor. I have also been known to ask pruning contractors about their wound painting practices.

Q. We are feeding the birds for the first time this winter. Our kids are fascinated and so are we. I have a question about suet, what is it supposed to attract?

A. Suet is flavored beef fat. It is appreciated by many species of birds but targets insect eaters like woodpeckers, wrens, warblers (especially orange-crowned), mockingbirds and kinglets. If you use the pepper flavored suet the birds will eat it, but the squirrels don't like the hot taste and pass.

Q. We received a cyclamen for a Christmas gift. Our nephew says they can be planted inside or outside in the shade. Is that correct?

A. Yes, they will bloom in the shade outside during the winter, or they will bloom over several years inside if they are facing a window with an eastern exposure. If you plant them outside put a cover over the bloom if temperatures are forecast to be 30 degrees or less.