

Gardening Q&A

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Q. We are planting the winter vegetables such as broccoli and carrots. We keep finding grubs in the soil. Should we eliminate the grubs somehow before we plant more vegetables?

A. The grubs you find now are mature and will emerge from the soil as June bug type beetles. They are very difficult to kill because they have finished feeding. Since they are not actively feeding, they also are not a threat to the current crops. It would be unusual, but if there are more than 3-4 grubs per square foot in April you may want to apply an insecticide labeled for the vegetable garden to the soil.

Q. We worked on naturalizing larkspur in our garden area for several years and have been successful. We didn't realize that the naturalized plants would grow up and over the snapdragons and stocks that are the usual plants we grow in our cut flower garden. Is there any reasonable way to have the naturalized larkspur co-exist with the planted flowers? Transplanting them is an option but it seems like a lot of work and contrary to the idea of naturalized blooms.

A. Naturalized larkspur are attractive and a favorite nectar source for butterflies and hummingbirds, but you are right, the naturalized larkspurs will grow over the planted winter annuals. You can transplant some of the emerging seedlings, but what I do is just designate one or more rows for the larkspur and remove the rest as weeds from the garden.

Q. We covered our Mexican limes to protect them from the last freeze with "plankets". Unfortunately, it looks like the leaves were frozen. We thought "plankets" would provide more protection than that? What do we do now?

A. Yes "plankets" are easy to use but they only provide about the same protection as a sheet. Next time use a blanket, or some insulate material in addition to the "planket". For limes and lemons, you may want to use a heat source such as a mechanics light whenever temps are expected to fall to 28 degrees or less. Concerning the current state of the trees you just need to wait and see how much damage was done. Hopefully the cold only damaged the leaves and not the stems. If the damage was light you may still get some fruit next spring if you prevent any further damage.

Q. Our neighbor recommends that we plant the paperwhite flowers we got as a holiday present in our landscape. Is it worth the effort?

A. Yes, paperwhites naturalize if planted in full or partial sun. The lush green foliage will emerge every December and be followed by the blooms in January. They are drought tolerant, pest free, and the deer will not eat them.

Q. Our peach trees are covered with a white flaky material. A Master Gardener in the neighborhood says that it is scale and we need to control it this winter with dormant oil. Does that sound reasonable? Are there any other directions?

A. Your Master Gardener neighbor has given you good advice. Scale insects suck the plant juices from the tree and cause it serious stress. Watch for a period of at least two days when the temperature will stay above 45 degrees and spray the dormant oil as per the label instructions. The dormant oil will suffocate the scale insects within their protective coverings.