

Gardening Question and Answer

Distribute 03-02-2020

Q. Can we place bedstraw, henbit, chickweed and the other broadleaf weeds in our compost pile? The seeds won't just be transferred to the garden after the material decomposes and we use it to enrich the garden, will it?

A. Absolutely use the weeds that you pull and collect in the compost pile. If you pick them when the plants are young, no seeds are present. If the weeds are mature enough to have seeds most will decompose with the rest of the plant parts. Even if some seed escapes to remain viable as part of the compost, it is a minor portion of the seed supply being distributed by the weeds that mature seed in the yard and surrounding landscapes.

Q. My snapdragons have been disappointing this winter. I never remembering the blooms being froze several times by such mild temperature, barely below freezing. When do you think we can plant zinnias to replace the snaps? I am anxious to have them blooming for the butterflies.

A. If the air temperatures and soil temps warm enough we may be able to have zinnia seeds germinate in the second half of March. You could also plant seed now in a greenhouse or other sheltered environment for transplanting later in the spring. The nurseries usually have zinnia transplants ready after mid- March.

Q. We have not seen any purple martin scouts yet, but should we put up our houses anyway? We usually have visitors before the end of February.

A. There have been reports of purple martins returning to nesting boxes in the Central and South Texas area. If your houses are easy to raise and lower, you could lower them to remove starlings and English sparrows when the martins do show up. I also become nervous that I will miss the returning martins and they will seek out more ready housing.

Q. What are good blooming plants to have for the returning hummingbirds? They should be here soon, shouldn't they?

A. The plants where I usually see the first hummingbirds of the spring are cross vine, larkspur, columbine, sweet peas, and stocks.

Q. Is it time to plant tomatoes in the garden? What are the recommended varieties?

A. Yes, it is okay to plant tomato transplants in our area after mid-March. To insure against a late freeze, reserve a few transplants in a sunny windless shelter. The Rodeo tomato this year is the Red Snapper.

Last year it was HM 8849. Both are heat setting determinate varieties ideal for our conditions. If you have nematodes consider BHN 968, Valley Cat, Celebrity, and or Tycoon.