

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. I read one of your articles published a few weeks ago about what to do about St Augustine grass having yellow patches interspersed through the lawn. Now my lawn is showing those symptoms. I wish I had paid more attention, but can you review the options again?

A. The action you take should depend on the cause of the yellowing. For most lawns especially those in the shade, or those in the sun that were not irrigated in the summer, the blotches of yellow and faded areas are caused by the winter weeds (rescue grass, annual bluegrass) declining with the warm temperatures. Your St Augustine is probably greening up now with the warm weather and some rain or irrigation. Fertilize the lawn with 19-5-9 slow release lawn fertilizer after you mow the growing St Augustine twice.

Q. I have just replaced my violas with moss roses. They are beautiful and so much more drought tolerant than the violas and pansies, why do we bother with them and not just use the moss roses all year?

A. Pansies, violas and other cool weather annuals prosper in the cool weather but decline in the heat. This autumn the moss roses, zinnias and other hot weather flowers will decline when the cool weather arrives, and we will be seeking out the plants like pansies that will prosper in the cool weather! It is necessary and fun to have a palate of plants that prosper under different conditions.

Q. Our dogs are loaded with those sticky seeds from the bedstraw. What action do we take to prevent the same thing from happening next year?

A. Bedstraw is bad, but another weed, beggar's lice (also called wild carrot) will be producing its seed soon. In my estimation it is even tougher to deal with than bedstraw! Luckily, both are easy to prevent if you apply a preemergent such as Dimension, Amaze, or one of the herbicides that prevent broadleaf weeds. Apply one of them in late August according to the label instructions.

Q. We took your advice and planted tatum (Mexican squash) instead of summer squash in order to escape the squash vine borers. It is growing amazingly fast. When should we harvest the fruit?

A. It can be used when it is golf ball size, but most gardeners harvest it between baseball and softball size. One gardener is planning on trying to use it as a baked squash when it is volleyball size.

Q. You spent considerable time on your Gardening South Texas radio show last week discussing the state of area milkweeds and whether Monarchs laid any eggs this spring. I want to report that we had good growth from our tropical and green milkweed by early April and the Monarchs laid their eggs. The

caterpillars ate almost every piece of foliage. I did not see the new generation emerge and fly off, but we think they did!

A. Thanks for the report. The uncertainty and dependence on so many factors all having to work at the same time illustrates how much of a challenge that the Monarchs face to have a successful migration and breeding year.