

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. Is there an easy way to pack up a spider mite infested tomato plant in a garbage sack without spreading the mites all over the garden?

A. Trace the Manager of Milberger's in San Antonio suggests that it works well to pull a large garbage sack over the plant as it stands in the garden and then cut the plant off at the base. One issue for this technique would be to remove the tomato cage without spreading the mites.

Q. Why are cucumber leaves and fruit turning yellow now? The fruit is also misshapen. Is it preventable?

A. We are at the end of the cucumber production period and the plants mechanisms are having trouble functioning in the heat. The secondary causes may have to do with pollination failure in the heat and disease and insect secondary causes. There is not anything that will work consistently unless you can reduce the temperatures.

Q. I have allowed my zinnias blooms to brown and drop their seed. As you predicted the result is happy goldfinches and lots of seedlings. Would it work to transplant some of the seedlings to fill more garden area with well-spaced plants?

A. Yes, the plants produced be dropped seed are easy to successfully transplant. Select an area in full sun, add some slow release lawn fertilizer to the growing area (19-5-9 works well) and water the transplants every day for the first week.

Q. Why are landscapers planting less Arizona ash trees for shade? They are attractive and grow fast.

A. Not everyone thinks Arizona ash are attractive. If you do not give them pruning attention as they develop, they can turn out to be gnarly and tangled. The main issue though is that the Arizona ash are short lived and subject to diseases like anthracnose.

Q. Last year our "New Gold" lantana was infested with lacebugs with the result that they quit blooming and assumed a dusty look. There were some suggestions that if we applied an insecticide before the lacebugs did their damage that we could avoid the bloom decline? What and when would we apply?

A. I would recommend that you apply acephate or the Bayer systemic insecticide right now to prevent the same damage that occurred last year. If the insects have already done their damage, a haircut to the lantana with a string mower will sometimes speed up the recovery, especially if you apply some fertilizer at the same time.