

## Gardening Q&A

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Q. There are red wasp-things that are visiting our southern pea patch. So far, they have not stung anyone, but they look fierce. Is there a reason they are spending so much time in and on the peas? Should we treat them with anything?

A. The wasps are feeding on aphids and other insects that are on the peas. Their presence is beneficial as they feed on sucking insects, beetles and caterpillars on southern peas and other pests in the garden. The only issue on being stung by one or more of the wasps is if you would accidentally run into their nest on a porch railing or under an eave.

Q. We are still feeding the birds. I saw what looked like a house finch male at the feeder but instead of a red area on his neck and chest, he was more orange. What do you think it was?

A. Are you a University of Texas supporter that sees burnt orange every place he looks? As you can tell I am a Texas A&M graduate. Joking aside, it is relatively common to see house finches that have an orange color.

Q. We decided to plant a new shrub border and used several different varieties of nandina. Unfortunately, we did not take into account the deer in the neighborhood and did not realize they ate nandina! We are going to start over. What are some shrubs that are deer proof? We have both shade and sunny areas.

A. In the shade consider the viburnums and primrose jasmine. Primrose jasmine also works in the sun along with Texas mountain laurel, yaupon holly, esperanza, poinciana, cenizo, and thyrallis.

Q. I know you declared that stink bugs and leaf-footed bugs were difficult to control. What were the insecticides that you recommended? They were on our blackberries, tomatoes and peaches this year. We want to be prepared to protect our fall tomatoes from them.

A. I have had reasonable success with Sevin and malathion. Both products kill the stink bugs if they are sprayed on the insects plus, they have lingering potency for individuals that arrive after the spray as been applied. Sevin is no longer manufactured for homeowner use but supplies that were left when the ban was declared can still be sold by retailers.

Q. We grow our Meyer lemons and Mexican limes in large plastic containers. We bought the containers from our local nursery. The containers are as large as half whiskey barrels but do not fall apart after 3 or 4 years like the whiskey barrels. Our one issue is that the fire ants invade the containers. Is there any reasonable way to control them?

A. Fire ants are notorious for moving into containers. If the plants in the containers are not vegetable or fruit producing plants, you can use a fire ant control with acephate. For your lemons and limes, I believe the label of the fire ant controls with Spinosad as an active ingredient allow use in containers and gardens that produce fruits and vegetables. Review and follow the label instructions.