

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. Something is eating my broccoli leaves. I took it for granted that it was cabbage loopers, but the damage did not stop when I applied Bt. Any ideas what it might be?

A. Slugs and snails will sometimes eat cole crop foliage. Apply a slug and snail bait. There have also been reports of rodents stripping the foliage off the plants. Instead of leaving holes like the cabbage loopers, you would expect rats to eat all the foliage between the stalks. Use rat poison or a rat trap. Is your Bt product relatively fresh (less than 2-year-old?). Did you apply it under the leaves and with some added detergent?

Q. We have planted milk weed for the Monarch butterflies, what should we do about the aphids all over the plants?

A. You do not have to do anything. Ladybugs and other predatory insects will eventually provide some control but in the meantime, you are not worried about maximizing foliage or blooms like you might for a plant in the vegetable garden. If it really bothers you, spray off some of the aphids with high pressure from the hose. The most important goal is, of course, to provide nectar and foliage for the Queen and Monarch butterflies without injuring them.

Q. I am giving up on my Junegold, Texstar, and Springold peaches. They have not been very productive in terms of chill hours and fruit quality. If you only had room for one peach variety in Central Texas what variety would you choose?

A. I have had the best chill hour response and best production from the Florida King selection over the last four years. If I only had room for one selection it would be the one, I would select based on my current experiences and knowledge.

Q. Does Cut Vine and Stump Killer work to kill the roots of unwanted seedlings in fencelines? Is it safe to use it in rose beds and other shrub borders to eliminate hackberries and Chinaberry?

A. Yes, the products such as Cut Vine and Stomp Killer are safe and work very well to kill the root systems of unwanted invasive seedlings. The products are inexpensive, easy to use, and safe to use near roses and other desirable plants.

Q. Is it safe to kill fireants living in containers with acephate? They are in containers with hibiscus and with Mexican lime.

A. Acephate can be used in a container that is growing ornamental flowers such as hibiscus but should not be used for the containers with Mexican lime or other food crops. Review the label of a fire ant insecticide with Spinosad as the active ingredient, they can usually be used for treatments in soils where food crops are planted. Comply with the pesticide label.