

## Gardening Q& A

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Q. We have 6 tomato plants in half whiskey barrel size containers. They looked to be doing great with large fruit moving to ripening, but now I see one of the plants is loaded with spider mites. Is there an effective way to treat the spider mites and maximize tomato production?

A. The best treatment plan may be to harvest all the fruit on the spider mite infested plant and then pull the plant out of the garden. The idea is to give the plants as much time as possible before they become overrun with spider mites. Be careful when you pull the infested plant not to spread the spider mites all over the less infected plants. Put the infested plant in a garbage bag and into the garbage. If it works as expected the remaining plants will be able to mature a good crop before the spider mites take over, especially if the temperatures cool.

Q. Is there a way to control squirrels at a bird feeder, they seem to be eating an unreasonable amount of sunflower seeds.

A. There are lots of options to consider. Switch to an Absolute Brand steel feeder with weight sensitive perches. They close when the heavy squirrel moves onto the perch. Switch to safflower seed from sunflower seed. Birds like safflower but squirrels do not! Start using pepper flavored seed and suet. Again, birds like it but squirrels will not eat it.

Q. I do not understand why it is not recommended to apply a soil insecticide for grubs at this time of the year. They are sitting there in the soil where the insecticide ends up.

A. Grubs at this time of the year are large and relatively inactive. They also are spread through the soil at greater depths rather than concentrated at the root/plant level when they are actively feeding earlier in the year. Apply the insecticide in May when the June beetle grubs are hatching and feeding.

Q. When can we plant onions in the vegetable garden? Should we use seed or transplants?

A. I have had a good response when I plant short day onion transplants such as 1015s in December. Onions are high nitrogen users so prepare the soil by incorporating 5 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer (19-05-09) or "winterizer" (18-6-12) for every 50 sq ft of bed.

Q. There are bluebonnet transplants for sale at my favorite nursery. Is it worthwhile to plant them rather than use seed?

A Yes, it is hard to find bluebonnet seeds or transplants because of the poor seed production over the last few years. Plan transplants in your vacant lot and allow them to drop their seed for future crops.