

Gardening Q&A

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Q. It looks like it was cold enough at the end of October that it caused some cold damage on our porter weed. When should we move the bougainvillea, hibiscus, and other cold sensitive plants into shelter?

A. As the damage on your Porter weed showed tropical plants can be damaged if temps fall below 40 degrees F. That last cold spell snuck up on us. Watch for another prediction for temperatures to fall below 40 degrees and move the plants to shelter. Another route might be conservative and just to move the cold sensitive plants to shelter beginning in mid-November.

Q In this column a few weeks ago you recommended that we spray our peach trees with copper hydroxide to reduce damage from bacterial diseases. Is it also time to spray horticultural oil to control the scale insects? Is it a problem if the trees still have leaves on them?

A. You can also spray fruit trees and other plants with scale with horticultural oil. If you spray the fruit trees with copper hydroxide it should knock the leaves off. Plants can be sprayed with horticultural oil even if they have leaves. Follow the label instructions on the horticultural oil.

Q. What is the best thing to use as a heat source to protect our lemons and limes from freezing temps this winter?

A. I use mechanic's lights connected on a medium duty outside extension cord. Poultry lamps also work well. Make sure the mechanic's lights are not the non-heat (LED) producing versions. Make a tent with your sheets, planks, or other fabric over the plant and place the heat source under the deepest part of the tent.

Q. Is it my imagination or is it really difficult to find stock transplants this fall? They are my favorite cut flower in the winter with the fragrance and beautiful flowers.

A. Apparently, some wholesale producers had difficulty producing stocks because of the timing of the weather events (cold when they needed heat and hot when they needed cooler weather) and general disruption to planning caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Hopefully, they will be easier to find over the next few weeks.

Q. Is there still time to plant broccoli in the winter vegetable garden?

A. It is best to get the cole crops planted as quickly as possible to take advantage of production between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Spinach and onions can also be planted.