

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. On your radio show you had someone call to say they disagreed with you that deer ate firebush. They certainly eat it in my area. They don't eat Texas mountain laurel, viburnum, four-o'clocks, iris, thyrallis, and esperanza.

A. In response to the challenge from a radio listener, I planted firebush in my landscape outside the fence again after 10 years. After 1 week the deer are eating at it but have not chewed it to the ground yet. It was also brought to my attention that this year the deer are not eating poinciana (Pride of Barbados). It is blooming spectacularly in three plantings within the neighborhood without any browsing by our deer. Appetites change, I guess.

Q. We are moving from our old home after 20 years and want to take some of the roses with us. Is that practical?

A. It is certainly easier to buy new roses in containers for the new property, but you can transplant roses. It is best to wait and transplant them in mid-winter but it can be successful now. Prune the plants back to 12 inches tall and wide and then penetrate the spade around the base 18 inches out from the center. This penetration with the spade should cut the lateral roots. Use the shovel to push under the root ball and lift it out of the hole. Try to keep the root ball intact. Carry the plant to the new location as quickly as possible in a large container. Water the plant in.

Q. You recommended that lantanas infected with lacebugs be trimmed back with a string mower and treated with acephate. I had good results by treating my lacebug infected "New Gold" lantana with an organic product, Garden Safe Fungicide 3. It includes the fungicide, a miticide and an insecticide. The blooms returned within 2 weeks.

A. That sounds like an amazing performance. We will have to see if others have had the same success with the product.

Q. The Monarchs have returned to our landscape for their fall visit. We have lots of choices for them in filling up on nectar. They seem most interested in the tropical milkweed, the mistflower, lantana, and zinnias. We also have Texas milkweed, butterfly weed, duranta, salvias, and porterweed but so far they haven't showed much interest in them. The black swallowtails are back interested in the horseherb!

A. I am having similar experiences. Please keep us informed.

Q. We are going to plant a new shade tree this fall and would like to have one that produces wildlife food. What are your recommendations?

A. My list of excellent wildlife food producing trees includes mulberry, Chinese pistache, hackberry, anaqua, Texas persimmon, loquat, ligustrum, oaks and pecans. Of that list oaks such as Schumardi and Texas red oak rate highest as a shade tree. Another good choice for some situations is the Texas pistache. It produces a summer berry (if you get a female, which most people do), has fall color, and produces a well-shaped crown with a fast growth rate. In some locales it may reseed but hasn't in my neighborhood.