

## Gardening Q&A

Distribute Oct 1, 2018

Q. What are all these small butterflies filling the air over the last few weeks? Will they eat plants in our gardens?

A. The butterflies are the hackberry snouts that migrate in big waves north every few years. They are more interested in nectar plants like zinnias, lantanas, salvia and mistflowers than foliage plants. If they do lay eggs it will be in area hackberries. Almost all the individual hackberry snouts will be stranded in San Antonio and areas to the north until a cold spell wipes them out.

Q. You described a control for cut worms when Bt did not stop them from chopping off the seedlings and transplants at the soil surface. What was it?

A. I spray malathion applied to the soil surface at the base of the transplant or down the row of seedlings. Slugs and snails can also be an issue. Control them with slug and snail bait.

Q. We visited some friends from work last weekend, and as we were leaving we noticed a tree with large leaves and golf ball size acorns. The tree was very attractive, and the acorns were amazing. Can you recognize it from my description?

A. Yes, it is most likely a bur oak. They are a good choice for a shade tree in our area if you have the space for a 60 ft tree. They are drought tolerant, relatively pest free, and long-lived. As a white oak they have limited susceptibility to oak wilt.

Q. Our Bermuda grass lawn really took it on the chin during the hot weather and drought last summer. Can we go ahead and plant Bermuda seed to get it back in shape?

A. Unfortunately Bermuda grass seed is not likely to germinate between now and before May of next year. It requires warm air temperatures and soil temps. Did all the grass die? That is unusual for Bermuda grass. I suspect that much of the grass will return if it is given time and the weather stays mild.

Q. I see that there are some snapdragons for sale at the nursery now. When will the pansies be available? Why are they always later than snapdragons?

A. Pansies are more sensitive hot spells than snapdragons. The frequency of hot spells during October is the issue. If pansies are growing and a hot spell of weather is experienced, they decline. Snapdragons are better able to grow in warmer temps.