

Gardening Q&A

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Q. Is there a rose that is not overly large that would be attractive and help keep foot traffic on the sidewalks leading into our church? The way it is now the landscape plants in the beds between the sidewalks get stomped by the foot traffic. Our landscape committee believes there must be at least one variety of rose that would direct the traffic without having too many thorns. It would be best if it was drought tolerant and easy to care for like the "tough modern roses".

A. The Martha Gonzales rose would be a good choice if the planting beds are in the sun. The plants have small red blooms over a long season and only grow to about 3.5 feet tall. It is a very hardy, attractive old-fashioned rose with enough thorns to direct traffic, but they won't cause excessive blood loss! They are drought tolerant and do not require pesticide treatments.

Q. I don't remember beets being hard to grow, but this year they germinate and then seem to disappear. The rest of the greens including the spinach, turnips, carrots and carrots are doing fine with minimal cabbage looper and snail damage. Any ideas?

A. I quite often have the same issue. Is there any evidence of cutworms? They emerge from the soil to consume the beet seedlings. To control cutworms try spraying the soil of the planting row with malathion or Sevin at seeding and after germination. It also appears to me that grackles and rodents will harvest beet seedlings. Trap the rodents and construct a clear plastic or Insulate covering to discourage the birds until the beets gain some size. Sometimes just moving the planting to a different area of the garden or a later planting will improve the success.

Q. When can we start pruning our peach trees? We had excellent growth last year and it looks like we will receive enough "chill hours" this year to produce a good crop.

A. I hope you are right about adequate chill hours for a good peach crop. It will be welcome after several years of warm winters with inadequate hours of temperatures between 32 and 45 degrees to produce full crops. February is the usual time to prune peaches and other fruits. Commercial orchards have already begun, and many orchards will not complete pruning until March. For written instructions and diagrams to assist your pruning, visit plantanswers.com.

Q. Our live oak trees are loaded with ball moss. What is the recommended treatment?

A. Ball moss does not hurt the trees so there really is no treatment required, but if you don't like the ball moss's looks you can treat it with Kocide (copper hydroxide). The product works best if it is sprayed on the ball moss in February or March. Ball moss is an epiphyte that draws its living from the air. It is not a tree parasite and will even grow on utility lines.

Q. Can we still plant sweet peas by seed and expect them to produce blooms for cut flowers?

A. Yes, plant the seed against a trellis of some kind to support the vines. Tomato cages work well for a trellis.