

Gardening Q and A

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Q. Are we in the active oak wilt time of the year? If so, does that mean I should not prune my oak trees? If I must prune because of driveway blockage and construction what kind of issues will I face?

A. Yes, the most active season for the spread of oak wilt is identified as February 1 to June 30 by most experts and entities. During this mild weather period the fungal mats on infected red oak trees and the sap beetles that carry the spores from the mat to a fresh wound on another tree are most active and viable. It means that during that period you should not prune oak trees unless you must. If you decide you must and the local laws allow it, paint the wounds that result immediately after they are made (within the half hour) Use pruning paint or latex paint.

Q. After you raved about "Rocket" snapdragons we planted several flats in our cut flower garden. Are they ever going to bloom? Do you think we did something wrong?

A. It was probably out of your hands. The wholesale nurseries are slow to start "Rockets" in the fall as they concentrate on the smaller and medium size selections. Those selections bloom faster than "Rockets". Those "Rockets" in my garden are just starting to bloom. I expect them to produce their large colorful flowers until it gets hot, probably into May. We need to encourage the wholesale growers to start the "Rockets" earlier!

Q. Our Sugar Snap English peas are producing pods now. What is the harvesting strategy? Should we pick the few new ones every day and store them in the refrigerator or can we just leave them on the vine until there is enough for a meal?

A. It is probably best to harvest them as they are available on the plant. You can store them for a few days in the refrigerator, but I think it is best to eat the fresh pods that are available every 2 or 3 days. Just pop them in your mouth or place them on the kitchen counter for everyone. Production will soon increase to large enough quantities to use in salads or cooked dishes.

Q. I only have room for 2 tomato plants. Which two varieties would you recommend?

A. If I only had room for two selections, I would plant the cherry tomato BHN 968 which I think has the best flavor of all the tomatoes we grow. It is also tolerant of hot weather. My second variety would be Tycoon. It is a reliable producer of large tasty tomatoes. Tycoon and BHN 968 both have Nematode and virus and fungal disease resistance.

Q. When will the Monarchs arrive? Will our milkweeds and mist flower be ready for them?

A. We expect the Monarchs to arrive in April. Usually the milkweeds and mist flowers will be producing blooms for nectar, and in the case of the milkweed, foliage for caterpillar food by then. I also rely on blue curl blooms. Blue curl (Phacelia) is a wildflower that is a popular nectar source. For insurance you can purchase a few extra tropical milkweeds in full bloom from your favorite nursery.