

Gardening Q&A

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Q. Bermuda grass is invading my vegetable garden. Can we use the same contact herbicides to control it as we use in the flower garden?

A, I think the only contact herbicide for grasses that is labeled for the vegetable garden is Fertilome's "Over the Top". Note that the wait times after application before you can harvest are quite long.

Q. You are recommending that we lower the martin houses now that the purple martins have fledged their young and are assembling for the trip to South America for the winter. What do we do with the English sparrow nests? I hate to discard their young!

A. That is a decision everyone must make. You could leave the houses up until the sparrows finish nesting, or you can discard the nests into the compost pile. One compromise might be to block the holes and remove the nests where there aren't any young in the nest. You could allow the nests with young to finish raising them and then lower the house.

Q. We have a row of oleander shrubs bordering our backyard. We keep losing 2 plants near the middle of the row. They slowly brown out and then die. The rest of the plants do well and bloom. I notice that the two dying plants are trying to grow in a dip in the ground. After a heavy rain, water settles in for a day or so. The plants are also close to the lawn sprinkler. Is the poor drainage the cause? What can we do?

A. Yes, I think it is likely that the drainage is the problem. It will probably work to raise the grade in that part of the row. Dig up the current plants and add 6 inches of soil to the area. Oleanders are drought tolerant and sensitive to poor drainage. Add soil to a large enough area that water runs off rather than puddles. It may also help to redirect the sprinkler away from the oleander.

Q. Do any of the deer deterrents work? We have sprayed our daylilies, but the deer keep eating them.

A. The product Liquid Fence works to protect new plantings and solutions made from soaking hot peppers in water work in many situations. For the treatments to work they must be applied conscientiously every week. The deer are not fond of, but I don't think anything will work to protect Daylilies are one of the all-time favorite deer foods. You would probably be better off moving the daylilies behind a fence and plant iris in the deer access area.

Q. What are the best varieties of tomato to plant for fall tomatoes?

A. Try HM 8849, HM1823, BHN 968, Roma, Tycoon, Valley Cat, Phoenix, 444, or 602. Avoid the indeterminate varieties in favor of the semi-determinate or determinate. The determinate varieties reach full size quickly and concentrate on setting fruit. It is a race to beat the cold weather.

