

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. Why don't we make more use of four-o'clock for a landscape plant? They are not eaten by the deer, have nice blooms with fragrance, and are very drought tolerant.

A. There are several reasons: four-o'clocks are undisciplined growers that spread from their large root system. The flowers are not very showy, and the unruly plant is hard to market.

Q. How much sun is required for a St Augustine lawn to prosper? How about zoysia grass? Bermuda?

A. Based on my experience, St Augustine grass requires 6 hours of direct sunlight (60%); zoysia needs 8 hours (80 %) of sunlight; and Bermuda grass 10 hours (100%). The sunlight must actually reach the grass to count.

Q. We are growing cactus and are having trouble with mealy bugs. Is there an insecticide or cultural practice that will control it?

A. Mealy bugs are difficult to control but on cactus I have been told you can dip the plant in a 25% rubbing alcohol solution. Include the container in the drench because the mealy bugs hide on the bottom and even in the drain hole. To ensure your cactus can survive the drench test the action on a guinea pig plant or two!

Q. My jalapeno peppers are not prospering. The leaves are narrow, and some are crinkled up. Any ideas what it may be?

A. Thrips have been very common this summer on peppers. They cause the "crinkling". To control the thrips use a spinosad or other insecticide labeled for vegetables. I would also not be surprised that the heat has stressed the plants. Peppers deal well with heat if they get enough water. Try increasing the irrigation watering.

Q. What are some deer proof blooming plants? We need some color in our property border.

A. Consider thyralis, pride of Barbados, angelonia, iris, esperanza, tropical milkweed, Texas mountain laurel, Mexican honeysuckle, salvia, and lantana.