

Gardening Q&A

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Q. Is there an organic product to treat slugs and snails?

A. There are several organic products that are designed to control slugs and snails. Just visit the slug and snail portion of your favorite nursery's pesticide area. Check the labels to verify that the active ingredient is organic and also if you are content with the process that must be followed to control the pests. One interesting and effective organic control is to use beer-traps. Sink plastic cups into the bed to be protected so the top is level with the ground surface. Fill the sunken cup half full of beer. Cheap beer, stale beer or premium beer works. The slugs, snails, and even pill bugs dive into the cup in high numbers and drown. Place a cup every 4 feet for effective control.

Q. My Crawford lettuce has put on a seed head. What is the best way to collect and store it for next year?

A. Steve Browne the KSAT TV Weatherman that did TV with me all those years use to just clip off the top of the plant when about half of the seed heads were in the dandelion fluff stage. He would store the seed heads in a paper sack until he wanted to shake some seed over a new area. He would just reach in and pull out some of the material in the sack to shake over the new ground.

Q. We are having trouble with fire ants living in our Meyer Lemon and Mexican Lime containers. What is effective and safe to use to control them? We expect they will have a good crop despite the pests!

A. Almost any insecticide will control ants in a container. For ornamentals and non-bearing fruit trees acephate works well. For your bearing fruit trees look for a product with the fruit included in the label. A small amount of Sevin or Malathion would work. There are also organic fire ant controls with Spinosad as an active ingredient that are labeled for control in the vegetable garden and are effective. Follow label instructions for the effective dilutions.

Q. What are the favorite nectar sources for butterflies in our area?

A. My favorites are mistflower, zinnias, tropical milkweed, porter weed, and sunflower for the summer. Lantana, salvia, and duranta also rate high.

Q. Our St Augustine grass is finally beginning to grow but it has a yellow hue like it is suffering an iron shortage. If it is iron shortage which fertilizer will address the problem best? Does the chelated iron work?

A. Chlorosis in early spring in St Augustine grass is not a major problem. The St Augustine grows out of it. Yes, one of the chelated iron products sprayed on the foliage would green it up. If you want a granular fertilizer with a good iron source check out "Iron Plus". Even some of the slow release lawn fertilizers sold by area nurseries have been enriched with iron.