

Gardening Q&A

Distribute 07-27-2020

Q. Always enjoy your articles. I have a problem I hope you can help me with. We have a terrible problem with cut ants. I have used all kinds of pesticides but nothing I have tried kills them. They will move the entrance to their underground home and come right back within a week. Any suggestions for control will be appreciated.

A. Cut ants are tough to deal with because they feed on fungus growing on the plant material that is stored in their large mounds. No baits replicate the fungus and the huge tunnels makes it hard to apply a physical control. I use an acephate roadblock to block the trails into my landscape. They usually shift their attentions to another direction. If it is essential to try and destroy the ants in the mound you can try mixing up a big batch of an acephate ant control such as Surrender with water and then pouring it into to mound at several points.

Q. How often should we have to water our Bermuda grass lawn to keep it green? We are burdened with drought restrictions and cannot believe the water authorities would expect us to sacrifice our lawn to save some water.

A. In most situations it requires irrigation once/week to keep a lawn green. The exception would be if you have 4 inches or less of soil. The good news is that Bermuda grass (also zoysia and buffalo grass) can go dormant and survive to green up when the rains return. St Augustine grass requires watering every 2 weeks to survive in a drought situation. The significant point is that letting the lawn go brown saves water for more important uses and does not kill the lawn.

Q. We have not seen any purple martins at our birdhouses for over 2 weeks. Have they all headed to South America? Can we go ahead and lower and clean out the houses?

A. I always use July 1 as my purple martin birdhouse lowering date. Our local birds may not be in South America yet, but they are assembling for the move and will not need access to the houses any more this summer.

Q. Our bougainvillea have quit blooming and are losing their leaves. We keep the soil moist so it should not be a problem of drying out. Any ideas?

A. Bougainvillea is an unusual plant, it needs to dry out between irrigations. If the soil is not allowed to dry out the plant will not survive.

Q. Is it too late to plant more zinnias for the butterflies? Unfortunately, we let them dry out during the hot weather.

A. Preserve any of the plants that still have green foliage by restarting the irrigation. Supplement the planting by obtaining some Dreamland or other zinnia transplants from the nursery. There may even be enough time for some seeded plants to reach bloom before cold weather arrives.