

Gardening Q&A

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Q. Are rose thorns poisonous? A friend of mine started a new rose garden and the first thing that happened was that she had a reaction to the thorn punctures on her thumb.

A. Rose thorns can be sharp and everyone who grows roses receives wounds. Sometimes those wounds become infected, but I have never heard of the infection being related to a toxic secretion from the rose. The infections result from contaminants that gain entry to the rose thorn wound just like they would to a sliver or scrape. The key to escaping serious infections is to clean and treat any wound that occurs before it becomes infected.

Q. I am receiving mixed messages, Is there any advantage to dead heading Pride of Barbados blooms and seed pods? What about zinnias, crepe myrtle, and vitex?

A. Up until this year some local horticulturists, including my colleague, Dr Jerry Parsons, were recommending that the blooms and seed pods be removed to increase late season blooming. It now appears that the removal of the spent blooms or seed pods on Pride of Barbados does not result in extra blooms. The plant does not react to the pruning quick enough to produce extra blooms. Dead heading seems to be important to zinnias and vitex in the quest to increase the number of blooms and longevity of bloom period. For crepe myrtles it seems to depend on the variety and even the individual plant.

Q. We have an infestation of nutsedge after applying what the landscaper said was compost. How do I get rid of it without harming my lawn or the lirioppe border?

A. Image and Sedgehammer have worked for me. Make sure you get the version of Image designed for nutsedge. Read and follow the label instructions. The products take several weeks to complete their work.

Q. How long does my spindly 8 ft. live oak tree need its bamboo stake? I planted it at a windy location.

A. It will probably survive without the stake but there is more potential for the stem to break and the vascular system to be interfered with if it is blowing back and forth. Leave it in place until the trunk grows and thickens enough not to be whipped back and forth.

Q. What is the latest we could plant new zinnias by seed and expect them to bloom?

A. Depending on the weather you should have new blooms to harvest and or enjoy if you get the seeds in place during August.