

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. What would be causing a large portion of our St Augustine lawn to turn brown?

A. There are lots of potential causes. Is the brown area in the hottest, sunniest part of the lawn? If so, it has probably just dried out. Hand water some of the brown area several times and see if it causes it to green up in the watered area after a week's watering every other day. Another cause could be brown patch. Does the browning originate at a low spot where water settles? Is the brown area growing? Apply a lawn fungicide to stop the disease spreading and add one inch of soil to stop the infection from starting in a lawn low spot in future years.

For a diagnosis of the problem carry or send a photo of the brown area to your County AgriLife Agent. Sometimes they will come out and check the symptoms.

Q. Our neighborhood is infested with cat's claw vine. The yellow flowers are beautiful, but the vine grows across the lawn, covers the fences, and grows into the trees. I am most worried about the vine growing over the top of the trees. It even grows up into the large live oaks. Do you think it is enough of a threat to our oaks to try and control it?

A. Yes, cat's claw (*Macfadyena unguis-cati*) is a long-term threat to shade trees. At very least cut the vines that are growing up into the shade trees. If you are careful and can apply the herbicide Remedy to the vines on your fence, that also is effective as a control. It is easiest to use on the fence vines if there are no valued shrubs or trees in the vicinity. If there are, the herbicide Cut Vine and Stump Killer would have to be used as an application to the fresh stem cut. Follow label instructions.

Q. What can we plant for winter color in the shade? How about the sunny part of the garden?

A. In the shade plant cyclamen or primula. They are both spectacular. Cyclamen needs to be covered by fabric if the forecasted temperature is 30 degrees or less. Protect primula from snails and slugs with slug and snail bait. In the sun grow pansies, snapdragons, stocks, dianthus, petunias, ornamental kale, sweet peas or calendula.

Q. The cabbage loopers are devastating our broccoli. Everyone says that Bt is the best control, it does not seem to be working for us. Any ideas?

A. How old is your Bt? If it is more than 3 years old replace it. Did you spray it under the leaves? Add a teaspoon of Dawn or other soap to the mix. Have you seen any slugs and snails in addition to the cabbage loopers? If so, apply slug and snail bait to the planting area.

Q. How high should we mow our Bermuda grass in the winter? I want to minimize the weeds that grow.

A. Mow your grass at the same height in the winter as you did in the summer. One and a half inches is a good height for keeping the weeds in check in Bermuda grass.