

Question and Answer

Distribute 08-14-2017

Q. I live in an area with lots of deer. Is there a vine that will work on a trellis that the deer won't eat?

A. The evergreen vine, butterfly vine (*Mascagnia*) is usually not eaten by deer and it makes an excellent vine for a trellis. It has yellow flowers over a long bloom period in the summer and produces an attractive butterfly shaped seed pod. A vine that is not eaten in any situations that I know of is Carolina jessamine. It has fragrant flowers in early spring and attractive evergreen foliage. Jessamine, however is a leaning vine rather than a grasping vine so would have to be pruned and directed to cover a trellis.

Q. Our Bermuda grass lawn is losing its green color. Is there a fertilizer I could apply to make it beautiful again?

A. The next recommended time to apply fertilizer is on or about October 1. At that time use a "winterizer" labeled fertilizer with a nutrient ratio of 3-1-2. The formulas 18-6-12 or 15-5-10 work well. The fading color is probably due to the 100 degree heat and a reduced availability of water. The rains on August 7 may have helped? The grass will perk up in September.

Q. I was able to purchase and plant the fast producing tomato varieties that you recommended last year –Roma Surprise, BHN968, Surefire, and Lavaca. I still have some room for more plants. Is there any chance that any of the large fruited heat-setters will be able to make a crop before the cold weather arrives? Which ones should I try?

A. If you buy any of the varieties such as HM1823, Tycoon, Red Deuce, Celebrity, Bobcat, 602, 444, or Valley Cat in the 1 gallon containers they should produce quickly enough to beat the first freeze.

Q. We need shade trees on our new lot. We like oaks. What oaks should we consider? Which will grow the fastest?

A. There are a number of excellent oaks to consider. Choose from Texas red oak, Schumard oak, live oak, bur oak, chinkapin oak, and Mexican white oak. Texas red oak and Schumard oak grow the fastest followed by the Mexican white oak.

Q. We have large brown areas in the sunniest part of our lawn. I thought it might just be the grass drying out but the brown areas did not recover when I hand watered the areas to add extra water. The spots did not even respond to the 4 inches of rain on August 7! The roots seem to be alive and connected to the tops so I don't think it is grubs. Is it a disease?

A. It sounds like chinch bugs. They are sucking insects that operate in the hottest part of the lawn and do not separate the grass leaves from the roots. Control chinch bugs with the same soil insecticide that you would use to control grubs. Follow the label instructions.