

Gardening Q&A

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Q. Why are all the cenizo blooming? There is no rain in the forecast. Does that mean the old-timers that say that “when cenizo blooms it will rain,” are wrong?

A. Some “old-timers” say that cenizo blooms after a rain? It seems to do both and is sometimes wrong in its predictions. We can only hope that they are accurate in predicting a big rain for us later in June.

Q. Is it too late to apply a pre-emergent to prevent sand burs? We were over run with them last year and wanted to prevent them this year.

A. The recommended application date is about March 1, so we are about 3 months late at best. Some gardeners apply a herbicide like XL or Dimension late because sand burs germinate over such a long period in the summer. If you applied the herbicide now, you would probably stop some late germination but would still be faced with plants that came up in May and June. Visit plantanswers.com to review tactics that are effective in addressing sand burs that have already germinated.

Q. My Junegold peach did not have any fruit last year and now it only has a few peaches that don't seem to want to get large or ripen. Any idea what the issue might be?

A. Last year when you did not get any fruit was the top also slow to leaf out? Most peach varieties, including Junegold, did not receive enough chill hours to bloom and even produce leaves. Rootstock shoots could have emerged to dominate the plant. A symptom of what happens when that occurs is that the Nemaguard fruit stays small and is very slow to ripen. See if you can identify branches that emerged from above the graft. Prune those that emerged from the roots and below the graft off. You want to re-establish the desirable Junegold top and remove Nemaguard suckers.

Q. We saw some ants earlier in the spring that were on the move at the edge of the house. The action even included some flying versions. We believed it was fire ants because we went through a similar experience in our travel trailer. They had moved in! Now that I think about it, however, I worry that it may be termites. What is the process to make that determination and then treat them?

A. The best way is to bring in a reliable pest control contractor to make the diagnosis and help you decide on a treatment strategy. If you don't have someone you work with, see if the neighbors know of someone that has a good reputation for pest control services.

Q. Some type of caterpillar is eating my parsley plants. Can I use Bt to control them?

A. Yes Bt will work. They are probably black swallowtails. They lay their eggs on parsley, dill, or fennel. Another option is to pull off most of the caterpillars and let a few develop to butterflies. You could also allow them one plant and pull the caterpillars from the other plants. Follow label instructions if you use a Bt product.