

Gardening Q&A

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Q. I saw some suet in the feed store the other day that was flavored with pepper. The packaging claimed that it was squirrel-proof! Is that accurate, pepper flavored suet is not palatable to squirrels?

A. It works in my yard and according to other gardeners who feed the birds. Pepper flavored seed is also eaten by the birds but passed up by the squirrels. They can also be discouraged if you feed safflower seed instead of sunflower seed and if you use a steel bird feeder with a weight sensitive perch.

Q. It surprised me that the freeze on Nov 18 flattened the Swiss chard in my garden but did not hurt the kale or collards. I see that they have started to resprout already. I am guessing that means I should let them replace their foliage rather than replace the whole plant?

A. Yes, I think that is the best strategy. With an established root system, they will be able to grow new foliage very quickly.

Q. Which of the winter blooming annuals are the best to replace the zinnias and mistflower to provide nectar for the winter flying butterflies?

A. Now that the butterflies are desperate, they are landing on violas, pansies and even cyclamen. I think calendulas, dianthus, alyssum, sweet pea, and stocks are the best, however.

Q. We did not get the cupric hydroxide sprayed on our peaches on November 1 as recommended. The leaves show limited damage from the freeze, so can we still apply the Kocide?

A. Yes, apply it as soon as you can. Keep in mind that that the copper sprays will defoliate any of your winter annuals so be careful. As always follow label instructions on all pesticides whether they are organic or manufactured.

Q. We continue to have problems from slugs, snails, cabbage loopers, and cut worms on our broccoli, turnips, chard, and especially beets. We have used Bt and slug and snail bait. Any other ideas?

A. It has been a tough fall for those pests. If your Bt is less than 1 year old and you have increased its effectiveness by adding 2 teaspoons of a dish soap per gallon, I would guess that the cut worms are the biggest problem. Dig up the soil in the row for the next planting of beets and then after you seed, spray the soil over the row with malathion. Also spray a week later after the seeds germinate and spray the other plants still suffering damage.