**Bugs, Bugs Everywhere**

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This is the time of the year when many plants are infested with insects and mites. Some should be controlled and others can be left alone because they don’t cause long-term damage to the plant.

Many live oaks have one or more variety of caterpillars feeding on the new leaves. They can be annoying as they hang from the tree on long strings or the droppings fall out of the tree, but the feeding will be over soon and there is no long-term damage to the trees.

If your rose blooms are deformed with brown edges on the petals the probable cause is thrips. Control the tiny insects with acephate or spinosad. Spinosad is an organic insecticide.

Aphids suck the juices from new growth stems, leaves other plant parts. They are usually green but can be orange and other colors depending on the species. Aphid control is complex. Most gardeners have decided that it is best to put up with some damage to give the beneficial insects such as lacewings, ladybugs and wasps an opportunity to get the aphids under control. If you use an insecticide, it kills the predatory insects as well as the aphids. The aphids quickly return because of their reproductive prowess. For severe infestations spray them off with water or insecticidal soap.

Spider mites also make their living by sucking plant juices, most commonly from tomatoes. The best we can usually do is to slow down the population. Seaweed extract, and neem oil both seem to have some control impact. Spray under the leaves every week until the mites show up and then spray twice per week. They key is to spray under the leaves thoroughly.

**Gardening Tasks**

Potatoes can be harvested once the plants bloom but there is no rush. Harvest them as you need them as the tops brown.

Individual squirrels learn to eat your peaches, apples, pears and tomatoes. You may have to trap the culprits to save some of the bounty for your own consumption.

Black-chinned hummingbirds are nesting. Providing a sugar water feeder will bring them in for close observation. Rinse and refill the feeder each week.

You can spread your wildflowers, larkspur and cosmos to new areas in the landscape by pulling browning plants with seed heads and spreading them in the target areas. Areas where bare ground exists, work best.