

Gardening Q&A

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Q. We are moving in to a new house this month and it needs a lawn to be sodded. It is mostly in full sun. What are our choices and what do you recommend?

A. The choices are Bermuda grass, buffalo grass, St Augustine, and zoysia for full sun. First recommendation if there is not 6 inches of soil into which to plant the lawn, add enough to make it 6 inches deep. Apply and rake or till in 10 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer (19-5-9 works well) to the soil before planting. Roll the sod once it is laid and water several times per week through the first growing season.

Bermuda grass has the most traffic tolerance and is the most drought tolerant. Zoysia grass is also capable of tolerating drought but requires as much water as St Augustine grass to stay green. It has good traffic tolerance and some shade tolerance. St Augustine is the easiest to mow and has the most shade tolerance but requires the most water to prosper. It is the most susceptible to diseases, traffic, and insects. Floratam is the most resistant to problems. Buffalo grass needs to be mowed very tall or the weeds take over. It is very drought tolerant but does not make a dense sod.

I recommend one of the hybrid Bermuda grasses for full sun. For more information on lawn grass choices visit plantanswers.com.

Q. My neighbor has larkspur blooming. The flowers seem to attract butterflies and hummingbirds. How do I establish it in my garden?

A. Obtain some of the seed from your neighbor's plants and spread it where you want it to grow next fall. If you want the larkspur to naturalize, grow it in full sun in a location where the seed will make contact with the soil. Larkspurs can also be seeded in rows in early spring in the garden.

Q. What does it mean if our onions are producing seed heads?

A. Harvest and use the onions producing seed heads first. It means that the onions with seed heads will not grow bulbs any larger than they are now. The bulbs on those plants will also not store very long. Use them up.

Q. We did not begin spraying our peaches immediately after they finished blooming. Now the green fruit has a waxy excretion from the skin. What is it and is there anything to do now?

A. It sounds like the fruit has been attacked by stink bugs. They inject their digestive juices into the fruit and then harvest the resultant stew. The result is the secretions you see and a lumpy scarred piece of fruit. If you start spraying now with malathion, it will stop further damage. Stinkbugs are difficult to control. Sevin and malathion have worked for me.

Q. What is the tall (15 ft.) shrub with orange flowers that is blooming around San Antonio? In the neighborhood where we saw several plants there were lots of deer, so obviously the plant is deer proof.

A, I believe you are describing pomegranate. In some neighborhoods with deer it has naturalized. The blooms last for at least a month and then some pomegranate produce fruit that is highly nutritious and used in drinks and recipes. Fruit production is erratic, however, especially for the naturalized shrubs. If you want the blooms and fruit, obtain one of the varieties such as "Pink Satin" from the nursery. The variety "Wonderful" is the most common selection planted. It is also an erratic fruit producer in our soil and climate.