

Gardening Q&A

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Q. If I am applying "Cut Vine and Stump Killer" to the freshly cut trunk of a 7 inch weed tree do I have to paint the whole cut or will it work if I just paint the cambium layer around the edge of the trunk?

A. The key area that must be covered is the vascular system (cambium layer) because that is the route that the herbicide takes to translocate into the roots to kill the plant. I believe that if you were generous with the application around the edge of the cut that it would work without painting the whole surface of the cut.

Q. We have some beautiful oxblood lilies that we want to thin out and use for a new bed. When is the best time to transplant them?

A. They will survive transplanting now with green foliage, but it is best to transplant them in the summer when they are in a rest mode. Mark the locations of the plants you want to transplant with a popsicle stick or some other marker. Oxblood lilies are very valuable. If you wait until summer to transplant your surplus bulbs, there is a better chance that the plants will bloom the first growing season after they are moved.

Q. On a recent radio show you and Dr Parsons were discussing mealy bugs on hibiscus. You weren't optimistic about controlling the sucking insects with an insecticide, even a systemic insecticide like acephate. What was the alternate treatment strategy?

A. Dr Parsons says that his team controls the pests by watching for them in the fall and then cutting the portion of the plant with the bugs off and discarding it. If you watch the plants closely and are conscientious in removing the foliage with the mealy bugs, it works fairly well. I think it is at least as effective to use a systemic insecticide such as acephate.

Q. Our oak trees are producing large numbers of acorns, should we rake them up or anything? I don't want more seedlings and they get in the dog's foot pads!

A. It is difficult to rake up acorns and most do not germinate. The best thing to do is to let the squirrels and birds eat them up. It will only take them a couple of months to eat and store the years production.

Q. Are there any wildflowers that grow in the shade?

A. Most wildflowers require full sun, but I can think of two selections, blue curl and *Salvia coccinea* that grow well in the shade. Blue curl is an early spring bloom that grows to 3 feet tall and blooms in both the

sun and shade. It is popular with butterflies and other pollinators as a nectar source prior to when the mistflower blooms. *Salvia coccinea* has a red (sometimes pink or bicolor) bloom that attracts hummingbirds. It blooms over a long season into the fall.