

Gardening Q&A

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Q. Our bur oak tree has been growing in the front yard for 6 years. This year for the first time it is dropping its leaves early. Should we be worried? It has been hot this year but not exceptionally hot. Should we fertilize or give it more water?

A. Lots of trees are dropping their leaves early this year. Bur oaks, cedar elms and bald cypress have been the most likely to drop their leaves early, but such behavior is common for the species and most should recover. It never hurts to provide some extra water for a tree during hot dry weather but do not fertilize until the trees are back in a growth mode.

Q. Will our St Augustine lawn recover from the drought? The areas in full sun have turned brown.

A. Unlike Bermuda grass, zoysia, and buffalo grass, St Augustine grass can be damaged if it goes much longer than 2 weeks in the heat without irrigation. Even if some of the lawn dried out to the point of producing dead areas, it usually fills in quickly. Now that we have received some rain and the weather has cooled down, most of the lawn should recover.

Q. Is there still time to apply a preemergent herbicide to prevent winter weeds? Last year we were overrun by henbit and chickweed. Which product would work best?

A. Now that we received some rain and the weather is cooling the winter weeds will begin germinating. Apply a preemergent labeled for broadleaf weeds and henbit and chickweed specifically as quickly as possible. Gallery is a product to consider. Amaze is used mostly for grassy weeds but it also works well in preventing henbit and chickweed.

Q. When can we start using our Meyer lemons? We have lots of small fruit and it is already turning yellow.

A. Use them as you need them. It does not sound like the fruit is going to get any larger this year. Next year consider thinning the fruit to encourage it to grow larger. Also consider using more water and fertilizer in the growing season.

Q. Fire ants are feeding on the blooms of our okra making it unpleasant to harvest the pods. What is the best way to control them?

A. For a quick easy control sometimes it works just to rinse them off the plant with a hose spray. You can also apply one of the insecticides with Spinosad as the active ingredient that is labeled for use in the

vegetable garden. Outside the garden apply a bait like Amdro. It is the slowest way to proceed but works well. Follow label instructions.