Garden and Landscape Issues

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There have been some unexpected responses in gardens and lawns to the rains we recently experienced after the long summer hot, dry spell.

The roses are now just beginning their fall flush of growth and blooms. The delay means that the peak bloom period will be in late November and early December. December bloom is always precarious because it will be ended by cold weather. Provide one more application of rose or lawn fertilizer and then let the roses do their thing as long as the weather permits it.

The rain has perked up the lawn. If your grass is green it is not too late to make an application of winterizer lawn fertilizer. The winterizer fertilizer releases its nitrogen quickly and it and the other nutrients are taken up and organized within the plant for winter hardiness and a fast spring green-up.

The rain and cool weather also unleashed the winter weeds. They will keep gardeners busy pulling them in the vegetable and flower garden. If your lawn is thick with rescue or annual blue grass seedlings, you may want to join me and my radio partner, Dr Jerry Parsons. We have decided to declare the weeds as the “winter lawn”. Mowed at 2 inches tall the rescue grass lawn will look great until April, when the plants attempt to produce seed. It is easier to mow than to pull or spray the lawn weeds in the winter.

There have been reports that some plants in snapdragon plantings have been showing wilt symptoms that resemble damping off or a root rot due to poor drainage. The plants eventually melt and die. Stocks, calendula, pansies and other winter annuals in the same soil do not seem to be affected.

It is too late to apply a soil fungicide and expect any control. Since in most gardens a majority of the snaps are surviving, the best strategy in the short term is to let the survivors grow and expand their root system to reduce susceptibility to the problem. After the rains slow, obtain replacement transplants to fill any gaps that result. In the long term, incorporate 4 inches of compost into the planting area to improve drainage characteristics.

The wet period will also support an expansion of the slug and snail population. The pests are especially fond of strawberries, primula, pansies and other low-growing plants. Apply a slug and snail bait to the areas around the plants.