Question and Answer

Distribute 04-28-2016

Q. Help me with some of the weeds. The one that is everywhere in my garden is very lush and low growing. It has leaves that are mouse-ear size and small white flowers. It is always moist in the foliage area and relatively easy to pull up in mats. The second weed is out in the lawn. It has small star-shaped yellow flowers and again mouse-ear like leaves. It grows to about 4 inches tall. The foliage is dull green.

A. It is often hard to identify weeds from descriptions but the first one sounds like chickweed (Stellaria media ). It is an annual weed that grows every winter. It is easy to prevent if you can use a pre-emergent herbicide such as Amaze on about March 1. It will produce seed and disappear over the next few weeks.

The second weed sounds like horseherb. It has a longer growing season than chickweed and will grow as long as there is adequate moisture. It produces loads of seed but also is a perennial. You can try contact herbicides with 2-4D, such as Weed Free Zone but it is hard to control. The best control is a strong-growing lawn growing in adequate sun. Horseherb fills in the gaps in a shady lawn. It can be mowed and the flowers are a favorite nectar source of black swallowtails and other butterflies. Some folks use it as a groundcover.

Q. What is new for summer color? I usually use zinnias in the sun and waxleaf begonias in the shade but saw some spectacular marigolds and impatiens at the nursery last weekend. I thought I might replace some zinnias with marigolds and begonias with impatiens. What do you think?

A. It is always fun to try something new but impatiens and marigolds may not be the best options.

Marigolds are very susceptible to spider mites in the summer. They will quickly be discolored and covered with webs. Perhaps try some cosmos or different zinnia varieties in the sun garden. I have gone back to seeding “Cactus” and “California Giant” zinnias. There are also the hardier native- like selections such as “Profusion”.

I don’t recommend impatiens because of their sensitivity to heat, even if they are grown in the shade. For something exciting try the “Whopper” waxleaf begonias. They have very large leaves and blooms and will grow to 30 inches tall and 20 inches in diameter. They have been identified as a Texas Superstar selection and seem as tough as their smaller waxleaf cousins.

Q. What is the recommended control for stink bugs in the garden? I see where they have hit my “Florida King” peaches and also fear for the tomatoes. I used neem oil and spinosad without effect!

A. Stink bugs are tough to control because of their size and mobility. Sevin seems to be the most effective control. It can be applied to fruits and vegetables up to 48 hours before harvest. Follow label instructions.

Q. Where are all the hummingbirds? We only seem to receive one or two visits per week to our feeder this year. Is the population down?

A. I have not heard any news of a downturn in hummingbird populations. This time of the year the hummingbirds have settled into their breeding territories and are nesting. With our mild temperatures and well-timed rains this spring there are also lots of nectar-producing blooms available. In a few weeks the first young of the year should be out and about. They will be less territorial and will spend more time at the feeders.