Question and Answer

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Q. We have several Texas mountain laurels that grew from seeds near the main plant. I have heard they are hard to transplant. Would it be worth our time to try and transplant plants that are 2 feet tall? They are expensive at the nursery.

A. Texas mountain laurels are difficult to transplant. A two ft. plant in a container is easy to plant with high expectation that it will survive but transplanting naturally seeded plants from the ground are difficult. If you can dig up approximately 5 gallons of root system without removing all the soil, expect about a 50% survival rate. Plants that are 1 ft. tall are more likely to survive and are easier to dig up.

Q. Half of my tomato plants were broken down in the hail. Should I pull up the remnants and do without half my crop this year?

A. See if you can find some large cherry tomato transplants at the nursery. Use them to replace the most hail damaged plants. Cherry tomatoes begin to yield quickly and will produce further into the summer. Allow the rest of the damaged plants to regrow from the roots and base. They will be late and have a smaller crop but you will harvest some fruit. Plants with severe main stem damage may not be able to support much fruit.

Q. What is your opinion of the battery operated lawn equipment? Is it practical for home gardening?

A. My wife and I have a battery powered hedge trimmer and a string mower. They seem to work very well. There are limitations because the battery must be recharged every 45 minutes and the equipment is relatively expensive. For small properties even the lawn mowers seem to be adequate. The environmental advantages are becoming more and more important.

Q. Is it too late to fertilize the lawn? If not, what fertilizer should we use?

A. It is a good time to fertilize the lawn. Use a slow release fertilizer such as 19-5-9 where 50% of the nitrogen is released over 3 to 4 months.

Q. We grew sweet peas this year. The flowers are still beautiful but the plants are forming seed pods. Can we collect these seeds and use them for next year’s planting?

A. Yes. Allow the pods to fill out and begin to turn brown. Collect the pods and store them in a paper sack where the pods will release the seed. Plant them in October and/or November.

Q. What can we plant in the vegetable garden now?

A. Pepper and eggplant transplants. Okra, southern pea, summer squash, cantaloupe, and watermelon seed or transplants. Sweet potato slips will also do well if planted now. Visit plantanswers.com for more information.