Question and Answer

Distribute 12-01-2016

Q. Tell us again what you recommend to prevent hackberry and Smilax vine from resprouting after we have pruned them to ground level. Thanks.

A. The product is “Cut Vine and Stump Killer”. There are several versions of the product with the same active ingredient, Triclopyr, available at area nurseries and the big box stores. The one I prefer has a brush attached to the cap that allows you to brush the product on to the fresh pruning cut. It translocates into the plant roots through the cambium layer (vascular system) that exists around the stem just under the bark. One key is to apply the product immediately after the cut is made. The product is relatively inexpensive, goes a long way, and works well. Follow label instructions.

Q. We still have lots of butterflies but our zinnias are overwhelmed with powdery mildew. Should I wait longer before we replace the zinnias with stock, dianthus, calendula and snapdragons or should I proceed? We hate to reduce the nectar source for the butterflies.

A. You are faced with a common dilemma, especially when the weather has stayed mild and the zinnias continue to bloom. I would pull most of the zinnias. Leave a few of the plants that are least affected by mildew. Planting dianthus and calendula that are in bloom will fill part of the gap. It is important to plant the cool weather annuals so they can be established before cold weather arrives.

Q. What are the flying beetles that are feeding on the Swiss chard? They are as bad as cabbage loopers as far as eating holes in the foliage. What spray will control them?

A. They may be vegetable or carrot weevils. Malathion will control them. If you are an entirely organic gardener you may want to try a product with pyrethrum or spinosad as the active ingredient.

Q. We only have limited space for onions and are trying to select the best variety. The nursery has Bermuda, 1015, Red Creole, Legend, Granex and Red Hamburger. What would you recommend?

A. All of the varieties you listed work well in Central and South Texas. Most are very mild. Red Creole has some pungency. I would select 1015 or Legend, the yellow onions. Legend is supposed to be an improved version of 1015.

Q. What are some shrubs that deer will not eat? Do any have shade tolerance?

A. Deer in most neighborhoods do not eat primrose jasmine, pittosporum, dwarf Chinese holly or the viburnums. All are shade tolerant. In the sun consider Texas mountain laurel, pomegranate, esperanza, thyrallis, and yaupon holly.