Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. Why does a cloth cover work so much better than plastic for freeze protection? I had lime trees side by side, one protected with plastic and the other with a blanket. The plastic covered lime looked more secure but the leaves were burned from the cold. The blanket covered plant escaped without damage.

A. It is a matter of insulation. The cold travels directly from molecule to molecule in the plastic. Anything that touches the plastic experiences the cold temperature. The blanket provides an insulating layer that does not transfer the cold in the same way. Clear plastic arranged as a tent is very effective because the air between the foliage and the plastic is the insulation. For more details, confer with a physics textbook!

Q. If we want to establish a naturalized bluebonnet area with transplants how far apart should we plant them? Should we plant them now?

A. Yes, now is a good time to plant them. They are available at many nurseries in 2 inch and 4 inch containers. They can be planted very far apart with the idea that the separate naturalized areas will grow together over 3 or 4 years. I prefer planting them about 3 feet apart. If it is a good seed year they could pretty much fill in the 3ft area with new plants for the next growing season. Be careful to allow the seeds to mature and explode out of the pods.

Q. Which yellow onion do you recommend? Is the Legend really better than the 1015?

A. It is hard to believe that any onion could be better than the 1015 but supposedly the Legend matures faster and is a little larger. In my garden last year I did not notice any difference.

Q. Why do they call live oaks “evergreen” when they drop their leaves every March?

A. It appears someone made a judgment that the live oak leaf drop and replacement period is so short that it does not deserve being considered deciduous. The important things are that the live oak is an adaptable, attractive, drought tolerant species that makes an excellent forest or landscape tree. Use the leaves for mulch or in the compost pile. They can be left on the lawn to decompose and enrich the lawngrass with nutrients and organic material. Run the lawn mower over them to speed up the process.

Q. Our tomatoes were marvelous this fall but now seem to be spent. There are some blooms and a few green tomatoes but none with any size. Is it time to pull them up or are they affected with something that we should treat?

A. It sounds to me that your tomato plants performed well and now can be placed in the compost pile. Gardeners with full size green tomatoes can pick them and let them ripen in the house.