

## Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. We have a naturalized pomegranate that is 20 feet tall and about 8 feet wide. We love it for the blooms every year. It does not have fruit because it is growing under pecan trees. The problem is that it is growing into the driveway leaving us less and less space to drive the cars through. Can we prune it? When is the best time? Are there any rules or directions about pruning the plant?

A. It can be pruned now if you don't mind if the bloom crop will be reduced? The best time to prune is right after the spring bloom period. The usual pruning plan for shrubs like pomegranate is to remove 25 % of the oldest stems at the base. In order to reclaim your driveway you could follow the offending branches (the ones hanging into the driveway) back to their origin at ground level and cut them there. After that is done remove some more old stems within the shrub.

Q. We have a beautiful planting of cyclamen in shade beds near the house. Some of the flowers are damaged as if there was a freeze. My wife noted, however that we did not get any freezing temperatures. She thinks that the dust from the lawn fertilizer I sprinkled into the bed caused the damage. She reminded me that you and Dr. Parsons had mentioned the problem on your radio show. What do you think?

A. The blooms are sensitive to the fertilizer dust, especially if you were a little rambunctious in applying the fertilizer and it was done when the blooms and foliage were damp. Another culprit could be sun during a hot spell. You mentioned however that the bed is in deep shade. Freezing temperatures below about 28 degrees would also cause some damage to blooms. The good news is that the bloom buds within the foliage will replace damaged blooms in a short time.

Q. If we plant onion transplants now, when would they be ready to harvest?

A. Plant one of the recommended short day varieties such as 1015, Granex, Bermuda, Red Creole, or Legend now after preparing the soil with 4 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer per 100 sq. ft. of bed. Plant them 2 inches apart in a shallow trench in the row. Harvest the middle two plants for green onions by mid-April and the full size bulbs should be ready to harvest about May 15. The tops will flop over when they are ready to be harvested.

Q. Our Rocket snapdragons are beautiful. If we pick some for bouquets for the house will they be permanently damaged?

A. Snapdragons respond well to being cut for bouquets. One issue is that if the weather is cold they often quit blooming for a while in January and early February. Use them as cut flowers. Other good winter flowers for bouquets are stocks, sweet peas and calendula. The stocks and sweet peas have pleasant fragrances.

Q. We want to make some paths through our landscape. We haven't decided between flagstone, brick without mortar, or just decomposed granite. How much base material do we need to use? Is caliche or sand better?

A. I sent you a copy of a past article I wrote on the topic. Three or four inches of base material works well. Caliche is sturdier than sand as a base. Use 2 inches of caliche, topped by 2 inches of sand. The sand is easier to level!