

## Gardening Question and answer

Distribute 01-30-2017

Q. My peach trees are a tangled mess. I have not pruned them for 3 years. Is it too late to put them in order?

A. It is best if you train and prune your peach trees every year but you can bring some order to the trees after 3 years. The keys are to open up the middles to allow in sunlight and air movement; control height to about 8 feet with thinning cuts; and to leave some of the new wood produced last year. Peaches produce on the stems grown in the last year. The new wood is the red stems. Thinning cuts are cuts to remove the target stem at its origin in a larger branch. Pruning with thinning cuts maintains the natural shape of the tree and does not disrupt the internal chemistry as much as cuts in the middle of a stem. Visit [plantanswers.com](http://plantanswers.com) for diagrams and instructions on pruning peaches and other fruit trees. Peaches are forgiving and grow fast so don't be too afraid to prune off the necessary growth.

Q. I want to aerate and top dress our lawn but don't know how to start! Where do you find an aerator to rent? Who sells the compost for top dressing?

A. If you are in a small town or the rural area it can be difficult to find the right supplies. You may have to take a trip in your pick-up to the nearest city with Home Depots and /or mulch and compost suppliers. Identify the nearest compost supplier on the internet and call them to see if they have aerators or where they recommend you obtain one.

Q. Tell me more about our options for flowers for the rest of the winter now that everything has been frozen.

A. Pansies should have made through the freezes intact. Most probably did not lose their blooms. Snapdragons lost their bloom but will have a second bloom period in March and April. Area nurseries have blooming transplants of pansies, calendula, cyclamen, primula, and dianthus. You can use ornamental cabbage and kale for colorful foliage. In my neighborhood the cemetery iris and paperwhites have started to bloom.

Q. We are having a lot of fun with our bird feeders this winter. At your recommendation we tried various flavors of suet. In addition to the kinglets, golden-fronted woodpeckers, Carolina wrens, and orange-crowned warblers that you mentioned, we have Bewicks wrens, myrtle warblers, and ladder-backed woodpeckers. My favorite flavor suet is citrus but the birds don't seem to have any preference.

A. I think you are right about the birds liking all of the flavors. Thanks for the report.

Q. When you are talking about planting onion transplants at this time of the year, do you mean the bulbets we can get from the internet nursery suppliers?

A. No, I am recommending that you use the transplants that are available at local nurseries in bundles. They are seedlings with green stems. The usual varieties include 1015, Granex, White Bermuda, Red Creole, Legend, and Red Hamburger onion. If your local nursery does not offer the transplants google Dixondale Farms in Carrizo Springs. They do a good job of shipping the plants to you in a few days.