

## Gardening Questions and Answers

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Q. Last year the bedstraw overran our yard and I see it is already growing in the shrub border and in the lawn area. Is there anything we can do to prevent it taking over the lawn again this year?

A. What you should have done this year on about September 1 is to have applied a preemergent herbicide such as Amaze or XL. Put it on your calendar for next year. Now that the winter weeds are going full blast you will have to remove the bedstraw by hand or apply a contact herbicide. The bedstraw sticks together and is easy to remove if you use a rake. The herbicide "Over the Top" is very effective at killing Bedstraw in the lawn. Follow the label instructions.

Q. As you predicted my snapdragons have perked up after the big freezes and some are even blooming. How should they be cared for?

A. Apply a cup of slow release lawn fertilizer such as 19-5-9 beside every 16 ft. of row or 25sq ft. of bed. . Keep the bed weeded and watered. The snapdragons should bloom into late May.

Q. What are the recommended tomato varieties for 2017 and when should they be planted?

A. Determinate varieties that grow quickly to their final height and then concentrate on setting fruit before it gets too hot are the best. Among those varieties are the new Rodeo Tomato CM 1823, Celebrity, Tycoon, Red Deuce, Solar Fire, BHN 968, Phoenix, and Valley Cat. Plant them in the garden at the end of March or in early April. If you obtain transplants before then, pot them up in 1 gallon containers filled with potting mix. Fertilize generously with Osmocote and place them in a sunny spot sheltered from the wind. If temps are forecast to fall below 40 degrees, move them indoors temporarily.

Q. What are some large shrubs to consider for a screen that the deer won't eat?

A. For the sun consider Texas mountain laurel or pomegranate. Primrose jasmine will grow in sun or shade, as will standard pittosporum. In the shade consider one of the tall versions of viburnum tinus.

Q. Is it time to cut back the dead parts of plants with freeze damage? My esperanza and salvia are already starting to sprout from the roots.

A. Yes, the plants such as esperanza, salvia, lantana, poinciana, firebush, and duranta can be pruned back to the live wood or they can be cut back to ground level.

Q .Our favorite nursery has bluebonnet transplants. They are on sale. Is it worthwhile to plant them?

A. It is relatively late but if you water them in they should bloom enough to produce seed for next year's plants. Plant them in rows in the garden or in clusters in the field where you want them to naturalize. Plant them 18 inches apart.