

## Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. Is mulch still useful when the soil is dry? Doesn't it prevent water from reaching the roots?

A. Mulch is an insulation material so it can collect a certain amount of water before it reaches the soil. That would mean it may intercept a rainfall of 3/8 inch or less. In most mulched situations heavier rainfalls than that however will penetrate through to the soil. In addition to reducing evaporation from the soil, mulch reduces weeds and keeps the soil cooler than bare soil. The net impact of mulch over the long term is positive.

Q. What are the best tomatoes for container production? Is it too late to plant tomatoes in containers for the fall?

A. The new "ruby crush" only grows to 4 ft. tall and is supposedly more productive as BHN 968 which is another good cherry tomato for containers. Surefire, Lavaca, and Roma Surprise are all determinate varieties that produce a medium size fruit quickly and do well in containers. It is getting late to plant tomatoes now for the fall so look for the large transplants in 1 gallon containers.

Q. What is a good evergreen shrub for a hedge in the shade that deer won't eat?

A. My favorite is Sandankwa Viburnum. It grows to 7 feet tall to form a compact egg-shaped plant. Plant it 6-8 feet apart for a hedge. Primrose jasmine has a weeping form when it is planted as a specimen. It grows to 8 feet tall and when planted 8 feet apart makes an impenetrable hedge. Primrose jasmine produces showy, waxy, yellow blooms in early spring.

Q. I have grubs in my lawn. What should I treat them with?

A. It is too late to treat this year's crop of grubs. They are not actively feeding. The insecticide won't be effective. Next year treat the grubs on or about June 1. Use a soil insecticide labeled for grubs and chinch bugs.

Q. When should we plant wildflowers? We ordered a Texas/Oklahoma mix from a retailer on the internet. How should the soil be prepared?

A. Now through the middle of October is the best time to plant wildflower seeds. Spread wildflower seeds on bare soil that receives full sun. For the seed to germinate it must make contact with soil. A site with weedy cover or in the shade will not work. You can go so far as to disc or rake the area and apply irrigation but most of us rely on seeding on unprepared, bare soil and the rains to provide all the moisture.