

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. Our fall tomatoes are infested with insects that we think are leaf-footed bugs, which are one of the stink bugs. How can we control them? The insect book says they cause scar tissue on the fruit.

A. At least one gardener I know collects them with a dry vacuum apparatus. All the stink bugs are very difficult to control because of their size, mobility and feeding habits. I have success by using Sevin spray on the fruit being infested. Sevin kills those stink bugs that are sprayed plus has a period of potency that impacts new arrivals.

Q. When can we start planting our winter vegetables? Last year I had trouble keeping the broccoli transplants alive and had to reseed the carrots and lettuce. We have come to the conclusion that it was because we planted too early.

A. The timing should be good if you plant after the 15th of September. One common problem with lettuce and carrots is that the seed gets covered. Lettuce is especially sensitive to the seed being covered by soil. Spread the seed on the soil surface.

Q. How long will our zinnias and vincas last? They look great but I don't want to miss the fall blooming period for snapdragons.

A. Zinnias and vincas could keep blooming as long as the weather is mild, often until Thanksgiving or later. You may have to remove the summer annuals on or about October 1 if you want to have snapdragons in place for their fall bloom period. It is always tough for me to remove the zinnias because they are so attractive to the butterflies.

Q. I have slow release lawn fertilizer in an open bag left from this summer. Can I use it for the winter fertilization on October 1 instead of buying a new bag of "winterizer" fertilizer?

A. Yes, it is most efficient to use the "winterizer" fertilizer for the lawn fertilization this fall but the open bag of slow-release lawn fertilizer will work. Another option is to use the open bag of slow release fertilizer for your winter vegetables and flowers. It is especially important that the greens and onions are well fertilized.

Q. When should we begin feeding the birds for the winter? We especially like the goldfinches.

A. October 1 is a good date to begin the winter bird feeding. Use thistle seed to attract the lesser goldfinches and later the American goldfinches. Most of the other seed eating species favor sunflower

seeds. For something different provide suet blocks for the insect eaters. You will attract wrens, mockingbirds, woodpeckers, warblers and others.