

Gardening Question and Answer

Distribute 9-18-2017

Q. Our red-tip photinia has begun its decline and we are looking for a good shrub to replace it as a hedge. Is Sandankwa Viburnum a good choice?

A. Sandankwa is a good choice if you are content with a hedge seven feet tall. It is deer proof and evergreen with shiny attractive leaves that make a dense hedge when planted seven feet apart. Viburnums all take some time to become established. After 2 years of regular watering they are drought tolerant. Another shrub to consider are standard Burford holly. It grows to 8 feet tall.

Q. We have round dead areas in our St Augustine lawn. Is it possible that the dog's urine is causing it?

A. Probably not. If a dog is limited to a small area the urine may burn the lawn but in our climate under normal conditions, the urine decomposes and is a fertilizer rather than a problem. If the circles are growing consider brown patch as the problem. Brown patch is a fungal disease that develops this time of the year in low spots in lawns receiving excessive water. The disease does not kill the roots so if it is brown patch the center of the circle may be greening up. To control brown patch reduce irrigation, only water in the morning, and apply a soil fungicide labeled for the disease.

Q. How often should we have to irrigate our fall tomatoes? We have a leaky hose we use twice/week but the leaves seem to be drying out.

A. As the plants grow larger and set fruit they require more water to support themselves. I use drip irrigation and water every day for 40 minutes now that the plants are large and carrying fruit. When temperatures drop below 90 degrees they can be watered less frequently.

Q. We are worried about our cedar elms. They are dropping large amounts of leaves. Could they be affected by a disease?

A. Cedar elms are very drought tolerant. One of their strategies is to drop their leaves early when temperatures are hot and rain is scarce. Live oaks will also drop a part of their leaf load after a wet spring. They keep the leaves as long as there is enough moisture for a net benefit to the tree from food production. When water becomes scarce, the excess leaves are jettisoned.

Q. We are planning a cut flower garden but want to concentrate on fragrant flowers. What are some of our options?

A. Two of the best fragrant blooms for cut flowers can be grown this winter. Plant stocks in October by transplants and sweet peas by seed. You can use tomato cages for temporary trellises for sweet pea vines. Replant sweet peas every month until a planting prospers. Stocks are easier to grow.