

Gardening Q&A

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Q. What is the small weed with a crinkly leaf and a yellow flower? Is there any way to control it in the lawn?

A. I believe you are describing horse herb. It is also called straggler daisy. It is a weed that infests lawns that are stressed from poor, shallow soils and shade. It is a tough perennial that also produces seed so can reproduce from the roots or by seed. I have not found a herbicide that is successful in controlling horseherb. There appear to be 2 options. If you can improve the lawn grass by providing more soil, water, and sun, it can compete with the horseherb. The second option is to accept as a winter groundcover. It mows well and is attractive. If you have deer you also will notice that the deer browse on the horseherb. It is also a favorite nectar source for black swallowtails. Come on over to the "dark side" and accept horseherb as part of a winter sustainable lawn option!

Q. How large do Arizona cypress grow? Is it a fast growing tree?

A. It depends on the variety but there are several Arizona cypress in my neighborhood that are 30 feet tall. They have a straight trunk and conical shape crown. Paul Cox and Patty Leslie in their book "Texas Trees, A Friendly Guide" show the species to be native to a small piece of Big Bend National Park and say it will grow to 70 feet. The trees I am familiar with do not grow very fast but they are drought tolerant and pest free.

Q. We are harvesting BHN 968, HM 1823, and Ruby Crush tomatoes but the quality is not what we expected? Is it the weather or can you think of another issue? We fertilize every 4 weeks with slow release lawn fertilizer.

A. I think other gardeners have the same complaints as you do. It will take a while for the plant to adjust to more mild temperatures at night. The leaves should be widening and moisture intake will be more consistent. Some plants acted just like peaches when they experience heavy rainfall after a period of dry weather. The fruit increased in size and the taste was diluted by extra water in the fruit. Some tomatoes even cracked from the high pressure water additions.

Q. How many spinach plants do you think we would need to provide all that was needed for a family of four? Spinach is the most nutritious green, isn't it?

A. Spinach is not as productive as collards, kale or chard so that you would probably need 24 plants to meet your family's needs. Fertilize generously to maximize production. Kale is the most nutritious green and spinach usually shows up second on the list.

Q. Is now a good time to dig up and thin out our iris bed? It is very thick with stems and doesn't seem to be blooming as much as in the past.

A. Yes, now is an excellent time to thin out the iris. Replant the rhizomes about 18 inches apart in full sun. The top of the rhizome should be at the same level as the soil surface. They do not prosper in soggy soil and do not need mulch. Iris are a great plant for our area. Distribute your extra rhizomes to gardening friends that want a drought tolerant deer-proof perennial.