

Gardening Q&A

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Q. When is a good time to plant a pecan tree? What size tree should we plant. Do you have a favorite variety?

A. My favorite variety is Pawnee because the nuts ripen in September and it seems to be less likely to be infected with aphids. Unfortunately, Pawnee transplants are difficult to find. Other recommended varieties for our area are Choctaw and Desirable. This is a great time to plant all trees and shrubs. A ten-gallon container is a good size, especially if it is hard to dig your soil.

Q. I am going to till my raised bed garden. I have some homemade compost and lots of oak leaves. I am inclined to till in some of the leaves. What do you think?

A. I think it is a good idea, especially if you are generous with fertilizer when you prepare to plant your next crop of flowers or vegetables.

Q. I have some extra Spinosad and lots of loopers on my broccoli and cabbage. Does Spinosad work as well as Bt to control caterpillars?

A. It will kill small caterpillars but in my experience it has not been as effective as the Bt products.

Q. Is it too late to plant sweet pea seed? Last week on your radio show you mentioned how well yours were growing this winter. I remembered how much I loved the sweet peas that my grandmother grew and used as cut flowers. The colors were beautiful, and the fragrance was wonderful.

A. Now is a great time to plant them. Buy a seed packet from your favorite nursery, soak the seed overnight, and plant them. For a trellis you can use tomato cages or purchase several of the portable trellises that you poke into the ground. Keep the sweet peas well-watered.

Q. Our favorite nursery has fruit trees this fall on sale. Which peach trees would be recommended. They may not have all the best selections, but I hope they have some of them. The price is right.

A. My favorites are Florida King, Junegold, and La Felician. You do not need a pollinator, so if even one of those varieties are available, consider it. Peaches do best when grown on 8 by 8 ft. raised beds irrigated with drip irrigation in full sun.

Q. Based on your recommendation we went ahead and put a new Floratam lawn in this fall rather than wait until next spring. It looks great, should we fertilize it now? How tall should we mow it?

A. Yes, if good sod is available, there is not any good reason to wait until spring to sod a new lawn. Wait until May 1 to fertilize. Use a slow-release lawn fertilizer such as 19-5-9. The lawn won't grow much this winter but mow it at 3.5 inches high all year.