

Gardening Q&A

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Q. We received your schedule for lawn care activities, unfortunately we had already applied a Weed and Feed product on the lawn 2 months ago. What should we do to get back on schedule with your recommendations? Should we go ahead and fertilize on again on May 1?

A. No, I don't recommend that you fertilize the lawn as early as you did, and I never recommend that you apply Weed and Feed to a Central Texas lawn because the timing is wrong. Your application was too early for an efficient use of fertilizer, and had you waited until the best time to fertilize, the herbicide would have been wasted. In terms of the schedule, concentrate on the mowing, watering and other non-fertilizer/ herbicide issues for the rest of the spring and summer. Fertilize again in the fall and apply a pre-emergent herbicide for winter weeds in late August.

Q. When is the last date we can expect new purple martins to show up to nest this summer? We have some new houses but no takers yet.

A. I have the same situation. My old houses have nesting pairs, but no birds have rented the new houses that we built this winter. I am going to wait until about May 1 before I consider lowering the new houses if no martins claim them by then.

Q. You and Dr. Parsons on your radio show said that this would be the last year that the seed companies would produce Tycoon tomatoes. It is such a shame. Tycoon is such a great tomato. I don't understand the hybrid seed situation, but you said that we could collect seed from our crop this year and replant it next year with minimal variation from the commercially produced seed. Are there directions how to do that?

A. Yes, visit plantanswers.com for a detailed account how to collect the seed from your fruit this year to plant next year.

Q. We have limited space but want to maximize the number of butterflies in our landscape. What would be the most productive butterfly plants for such a situation?

A. Plant zinnias, Gregg's mistflower, tropical milkweed, lantana, and salvia. If you have the space, also include a duranta, Mexican flame vine, a porter weed, and a mint marigold.

Q. Is it time to plant okra? Is there any variety that is best? Our favorite nursery has seed for Clemson Spineless. Does it do well?

A. Yes, we can plant okra by seed or transplant now. Clemson Spineless is a good choice. All the varieties available seem to do well.