

## Gardening Q&A

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Q. In your opinion what is the best tasting tomato that we can grow in this area? Is it too late to plant tomatoes and expect a summer harvest?

A. That is a tough question because so many factors contribute to taste such as weather and degree of ripeness. Most importantly everyone's idea of the "best" taste is different. Through the years the Extension Service has conducted taste tests with out consistent results. In 2017, however, a taste test conducted at a tomato program by Dr Parsons resulted in every tester selecting HM 1823 as the best tasting tomato from among our recommended varieties including Red Deuce, Tycoon, and Celebrity. My personal favorites are the cherry tomatoes Ruby Crush and BHN 968. It is getting late to plant tomatoes and to expect much fruit set before the hot weather ends the process, but if you can find a nursery with some healthy large plants in 1-3 gallon containers, they may provide some fruit.

Q. We were spreading material from our compost pile and discovered several huge grubs. They are finger size. We destroyed them because they looked so gruesome. Did we do right? Do you know what insect it is?

A. Yes, the large grubs found at the edge of compost piles are the larvae of rhinoceros beetles, a beneficial insect that eats other insects. The grubs consume the decomposed organic material in the cool part of the pile, usually around the edge. Next time let the grubs survive.

Q. Leaf-footed bugs have attacked our peaches. We prefer to use organic pesticides but none of our usual sprays seem to phase them. They are also hard to collect by hand because they fly away. Do you have any recommendations?

A. I have had the same experience as you have with leaf-footed bugs. They are difficult to control. Neither Sevin or malathion are organic controls but they are effective in control leaf-footed bugs and other stink-bug relatives. Follow the label instructions.

Q. Our snapdragons in the flower garden are beautiful now but I notice that some of the plants are infected with a disease that expresses itself as yellow spots on the top of the leaves and rust colored powder on the undersides. The plants quit blooming and eventually die. I sprayed with daconil and neem oil but neither works> Is there a treatment?

A. The disease is rust, a fungus. Unfortunately there doesn't seem to be a treatment that works. It is very common on snapdragons as soon as the weather warms up. Pull infected plants as soon as they show up to slow the spread. When the rust shows up, it is time to replace the snapdragons with zinnias or one of the other hot weather flowers.

Q. What are some of the best plants to attract humming birds to our landscape. We have a sugar water feeder and that brings them in but we were at a friends house the other day and he talked about blooming plants to attract even more birds then the feeders.

A. Some of the favorite hummingbird nectar sources are cross vine, *Salvia greggii*, lantana, porter weed, cape honeysuckle, larkspur, Turk's cap, Mexican honeysuckle, firebush, zinnias, and the summer salvias.