

Gardening Q&A

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Q. Three years ago I had planted Sandankwa Viburnum for a 7-foot hedge in the partial shade. It has done well including escaping the deer. Now however it is starting to wilt in this dry hot weather we are experiencing. Do I need to do anything special to it? I watered each plant by hand and they seemed to recover. What else needs to be done?

A. The best option is to treat it as a newly planted shrub and let the hose run at the base for a half hour to restore the moisture in the root ball. Hand water every week or do the half hour soaking every two weeks until the weather breaks.

Q. We have hose spigots that are sunk in the ground with a cover. The arrangement makes it convenient for protecting the faucet from being run over by the mower but this summer two of the boxes have become homes to tarantulas. They are not aggressive, but it makes me uncomfortable to stick my hand in the box to turn the hose on! Any ideas how I can discourage them from taking up residence in the box?

A. I have experienced the same situation. In addition to staying alert and making a visual search before I stick my hand in, I have relocated one of the beneficial but frightening arachnids to another part of my yard with a hand shovel. I also think it discourages them from moving in if you leave the cover open. Good luck!

Q. We received some cemetery iris rhizomes from a friend last fall. They were stored in a paper sack in an air-conditioned storage room all this time. The rhizomes are dry, but they still look okay. I finally have the time and the space to plant them. Do you think they will live?

A. Many gardeners have had success with iris after a long storage period, but I believe it is better to plant them than wait any longer. Plant them in full sun so that the top of the rhizome is level with the soil surface. Water them in and every 1 to 2 weeks this summer. Deer don't usually eat iris, but they are curious and may pull them out of the ground. Spray every week with Liquid Fence for 3 weeks to discourage any curiosity.

Q. You and Dr Parsons on the radio were talking about what to do if you discovered that your garden had nematodes when you pulled the spring plants this month. I missed what the recommended treatment was.

A. The spring plants generally finish their fruit production by now and should be pulled to make room for the fall planting after mid-July. If you see the knobby root system that indicates nematodes, cut off the infected roots and discard them in the garbage rather than the compost pile. To counteract nematodes, you need to use nematode resistant selections such as Celebrity, BHN 968, Tycoon, or Valley Cat in the garden.

Q. What are the best zinnias to plant for cut flowers?

A I like California Giants and Cactus zinnias planted with seed for cut flowers. They are also favorite nectar sources for butterflies and hummingbirds.