

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. Why do researchers say that deer don't eat grass? In my neighborhood they always seem to be grazing on the lawn

A. Researchers have analyzed the stomach content of deer many times and there is very little grass detected. In my neighborhood the deer appear to be grazing just like you describe but they are browsing horseherb and other broadleaf plants that grow in the lawn. The broadleaves are especially common in lawns with shade and with poor soils.

Q. The purple martins have been gone for about 2weeks now. Is it a good time to lower the houses to prevent further prevention of English sparrows? We also end up with hornets taking up residence in the houses>

A. Some purple martin experts believe that it is best to leave up the houses for a while after the youngsters fledge if they return to visit. They speculate that these visits in the morning or evening by both the young of the season and the mature birds, are part of the process for selecting their nesting sites for the next spring. If none of the birds are returning to hang about the houses, it is reasonable to lower them and clean them out.

Q. We did not water our St Augustine grass during the April/May/June drought. That part shaded by our large oaks greened up quickly after it rained but there is a strip at the edge in the sun that is glaringly golden and looks dead. Could it be dead?

A. Yes, it could be dead because it was subjected to more that 3 weeks of dry soil in full sun. If it continues to rain on a regular basis, the St Augustine from the live part of your lawn will quickly spread into the dead area.

Q. When do we quit trimming our mint marigold and fall aster back? It is growing vigorously, and I don't want to reduce its bloom in the fall by pruning too much.

A. The last haircut is usually applied about September 1. The trimming results in a compact mound covered by the respective blooms, blue in the case of the aster, and golden for the mint marigold. Mint marigold has a strong anise fragrance and is deer proof. If the plants are not trimmed, the results are tall mounds can be flattened by the wind or rain and are not compact.

Q. Is there still time to plant fall tomatoes?

A. Yes, look for determinate or semi-determinate plants such as Phoenix, BHN 968, Ruby Crush, 444, Celebrity, Tycoon, Surefire, Roma Surprise, Red Deuce, or Sunbrite. The determinate plants are those that quickly grow to full size and then concentrate on producing fruit. The small fruited plants such as Ruby Crush, BHN 968, Roma, and Surefire are the fastest to mature fruit and always beat the cold weather.