

Gardening Q&A

Distribute 08-13-2018

Q. We originally planted our Meyer lemon tree in the ground at a sheltered spot by the house. We only harvested a few lemons and drew the conclusion that it was not getting enough sun. In April we moved it to a sunnier site, but it is still not setting any fruit. As you can tell the foliage is very green and attractive. It blooms but has not set fruit. We are fertilizing heavily with Osmocote. Any ideas?

A. The tree was just transplanted in April after being grown in the shade for several years. It may take the tree some time to adjust to full sun. You can often transplant a citrus tree from a small container to a larger container or the ground without disrupting the bloom and fruit setting schedule, but it is harder to move a larger tree from one location in the ground to another without some transplanting impact. Also, don't apply any more fertilizer until next February. Expect the tree to begin setting fruit next spring.

Q. What is causing the yellow areas in our St Augustine lawn?

A. The most common causes of brown or yellow areas in the lawn right now are lack of water and chinch bugs. Determine which it is in your lawn by doing a watering test. Hand water a portion of the yellow area every day for a week. If it greens up, you know that a lack of water is causing the problem. Your sprinkler system may be applying the water unevenly. You may have to call your irrigation contractor in to correct the problem. If the area does not green-up from the special hand watering, it is probably caused by chinch bugs. Chinch bugs are small, but you may be able to see them at the base of the grass plants. Treat chinch bugs with a soil insecticide.

Q. We have a plum tree and peach tree. Before the fruit gets larger than a dime, the squirrels and rats eat them. The squirrels also eat all the pecans off our tree before the nuts get large enough to harvest. Is this a hopeless situation?

A. I am blessed with squirrels and rats in my landscape as well. They harvest a significant share of the fruits and nuts there as well, but they usually wait for them to grow larger than you are describing. The most practical option seems to be to reduce the number of the squirrels and rats supported by your landscape. Squirrels are relatively easy to catch with a live trap with peanut butter as bait. It seems to work best with rats to enlist the help of a pest control company.

Q. We planted jalapeno and mild banana peppers. The plants seem not to be robust as we expected. The fruit is also small. Should we fertilize peppers just the way we do tomatoes or is it just this hot weather?

A. Peppers prosper in hot weather if they have enough water and nutrients. Yes, fertilize each of the plants with a half cup of slow release lawn fertilizer every month.