Distribute 5-25-15

Question and Answer Article, Protecting Peaches

Q. I followed your recommendation on insects and diseases by using a weekly spray on my peaches. It worked very well in protecting the fruit from those problems. The issue now is the birds! My first peaches to ripen, the Florida Kings had big gauges from the bird’s beaks. How do I protect the late ripening peaches from the birds?

A. Birds are a tough issue. Bird netting seems to be the best solution. It is available at your favorite retail nursery. Place the netting on the tree before the peaches begin to show color. Squirrels and other mammals may also raid the trees. The best solution for them if they cause damage, seems to be to use a live trap and then a trip of several miles to release the culprit away from the trees.

Q. We harvested our first tomatoes last week. All of them had a black leathery growth on the bottom. Is it a disease? What can we do?

A. The problem is called blossom-end-rot. It is caused by fluctuation in moisture to the plant and a resultant shortage of calcium. Blossom-end-rot is especially common in container-grown plants and early in the season as the weather changes. Keep the plants well-watered and you probably will not see the problem again this year. Just cut the black tissue off of the tomato and use the rest of the fruit.

Q. With all the rain we did not get a chance to fertilize the lawn. It looks great. Should we skip it now and just plan on the fall application?

A. I recommend you go ahead and fertilize with a slow-release fertilizer such as 19-5-9. The combination of adequate rain and plenty of nutrients will help the lawn recover from the tough conditions it was subjected to over the last few years. It is not too late to fertilize the lawn.

Q. The live oak suckers are growing all over my lawn. Is there anything I can do for a permanent fix? Does it hurt to keep mowing them? What about oak wilt?

A. There is no permanent fix for oak suckers. The best control strategy continues to be to mow them as a regular part of lawn mowing. The cut stems do not serve as oak wilt entry points because they are such a small diameter that the tree’s defensive chemicals quickly move in to block penetration and development of the disease spores.

Q. It is a great year for iris. Now the plants are forming seed pods. Should we let them develop, or cut them off?

A. Cut them off so that the plants resources are utilized to develop more foliage and rhizomes rather than to develop seeds.