Question and Answer

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Q. Why don’t horticulturists promote oleanders anymore? They are blooming well right now in our neighborhood despite the heat.

A. Many oleanders died because of a disease called leaf scorch spread by sharpshooter insects. Despite considerable research, no effective treatments have been discovered. Enjoy the blooms but I would not recommend planting new ones at this point in time.

Q. How much do I need to water fall tomatoes? With the heat they seem to wilt at the end of every day.

A. I irrigate my fall tomatoes everyday with drip irrigation for 40 minutes now that they have a root system. For the first 2 weeks I watered every other day with a hand held hose in an attempt to moisten more soil to encourage a larger root system.

Q.Is it too late this summer to put in a new lawn? We just finished construction of a new house and we hate to have to wait until next spring.

A. If the lawn area is in full sun and if you want to plant a Bermuda grass lawn by seed, it is best to do it as quickly as possible before mid- September. If you are sodding Bermuda, zoysia, or St Augustine grass you have more time. As long as sod is available from a reputable retailer it can be planted in our climate. I should have mentioned first thing that adequate water must be available to establish the lawn.

Q. We need to have some live oak branches that are rubbing our roof removed. The arborist who does most of the work in our neighborhood says he will give us a good price now. Will pruning live oak trees in this heat hurt them?

A. Actually the hottest part of summer is a good time to prune oaks because they are safest from oak wilt in the heat. The fungal spores are not produced in the hottest part of the summer. Even though the likelihood of the spread of oak wilt is small at this time of the year, insist that your pruning contractor paint the wounds immediately after the cuts are made. It sounds like your arborist has a long history of success in your neighborhood so he /she would probably paint all wounds on oaks without having to remind him.

Q. Did I remember right from last year that the recommended time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent bedstraw is at the end of August? Last winter we were buried in the pesky weed and we don’t want to go through that again!

A. Yes use Amaze, XL, Gallery, Portrait or one of the other pre-emergent herbicides labeled for both broad-leaf and grassy weeds. The will prevent germination of rescue grass, dandelions, beggar’s lice, and annual bluegrass in addition to bedstraw. Review the label listing of weeds and application instructions before you buy a product to make sure it will control your problem weeds and that you can comply with the application requirements.