

01. Question: I want to plant a Flowering tree in the front yard in an 88 sq. ft. area. I want a tree that will give me flowers in the spring and a colorful leaf display in the winter. My first inclination is a flowering cherry tree. If cherry trees are not recommended then please tell me your recommendations.

Answer: I do not recommend any of the cherries. Our winter temperatures aren't cold enough to give them the chilling they need to bloom well. I recommend that you plant a Crape Myrtle instead.

02. Question: I have a yellow bell plant with the bean shaped things hanging on it now. What are they and can I grow new plants from them?

Answer: These are seed pods and you do not want to try to grow new plants from them as the resulting plants will most likely not be as nice and full of blossoms as is the one which you have growing. Rather they could be tall and lanky with sparse blossoms. If you want more you should purchase those that are identified as *Tecoma stans* "Gold Star."

03. Question: I am putting my home up for sale to move into a seniors' complex. I have a pergola with nothing on it. What is a fast, flowering vine that I could plant in a couple of pots beside the pergola next spring that would bring color into a small, garden-home back yard?

Answer: Coral Vine (*Antigonon leptopus*) is a quick growing, deciduous perennial that is very colorful. You could also consider the annual Morning Glory or the annual Cypress Vine.

04. Question: I have an Angels Trumpet that I would like to take cuttings from and start new plants. What is the best way to accomplish this?

Answer: Select cuttings from older wood about 6 to 8 inches long. Remove all of the leaves and stick the bottom 2 to 4 inches into a container filled with a good quality potting mix. Water thoroughly and place in a warm area in the shade. Water only sparingly to keep the soil barely damp. They should root within 2 to 4 weeks. Leave in the container until next spring after any danger of frost or freeze when you can plant them outside.

05. Question: I have several Texas Mountain Laurels in my yard. Last year continuing into this year they have what looks like a black mold on all the older leaves. It is somewhat sticky and nothing I use has had any effect on it at all. Do you have any ideas as to what it is or what I can use to remove/kill it?

Answer: Either the mountain laurels or plants growing over the mountain laurels are infested with a sucking insect. Things like aphids, scale and mealy bugs suck the sap from the plants and then excrete a sugary liquid called 'honeydew' which falls on the leaves under them. The black is sooty mold which is growing on the honeydew. Kill the insects and you will take care of the problem. You can kill the aphids and mealy bugs with an insecticide containing Spinosad. For scale you need to use one of the horticultural oils or a product containing Neem oil. The black sooty mold will be on the leaves until it wears off or until the leaf falls off and is replaced.

06. Question: Are Poinsettia, Bird of Paradise and Crown of Thorn perennials? Do they need to be covered during freezes?

Answer: All three are perennials and all need to be protected from frost or freezing temperatures.

07. Question: I have three *Duranta* plants that are becoming somewhat overgrown. I don't want to kill them by over-trimming them. What is the best time of year for trimming and how far back can I trim the plants?

Answer: This should be done in the early spring before new growth commences. Late February would be good. You can cut them back as severely as you wish without harming them.

08. Question: I have a bed of Snapdragons that were put out about 3 weeks ago. The plants are about 10 inches tall. Some show signs of WILTING. The soil moisture is OK. What is the most likely problem?

Answer: Check to be sure that the soil in the root ball of the plant (the small bit of soil that you brought it home from the nursery with) is getting sufficient moisture. If they are being watered with a sprinkler system they are probably not getting wet.

09. Question: We are new to the area and have planted Monterey Oak, Esperanza, oleanders, and crepe myrtle. When and how much do we fertilize? Oleanders were planted a year ago. The others were planted a month ago.

Answer: Wait until early next spring (late February) and then fertilize all of these plants with the commonly available 19-5-9 lawn fertilizer. Spread about a cup over the root area of each plant and water it in well.

10. Question: Besides confederate jasmine, are there low growing ground covers that bloom?

Answer: You can consider *Wedelia trilobata* (yellow blossoms). It will freeze down should we have freezing temperature but come back from its roots in the spring.

11. Question: What do I need to do to take the best care of my Amaryllis plants over the winter?

Answer: If your Amaryllis is the Hardy Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum X johnsonii*) they should be fine without any special care. However, if it is one of the very large flowered Amaryllis that is usually sold as holiday bulbs for forcing inside, it will not be hardy outside in the event that we have freezing temperatures. It should be brought into a protected location to over winter. Or you can just dig the bulb and store it in a dry location that will not be subjected to freezing temperatures.

12. Question: How do I prepare my hibiscus for winter? They are in large containers, difficult to move from my patio. Should I cut them to the ground and cover them with mulch?

Answer: If these are the tropical Chinese Hibiscus (large shiny green leaves and typical hibiscus bloom) they will need to be brought into a protected area where it does not freeze. If they are perennial Mallow Hibiscus they should be fine without protection, freezing to the ground with the first freeze and returning from their roots in the spring. Do not prune regardless of the kind until next spring. When new growth commences you will be able to recognize any freeze damage and cut it out.

13. Question: We have several Burford holly bushes that have developed areas that appear to have spider web-like material. Also, the underside of many of the leaves has a white powdery appearance and the leaves are dying and falling off. Can you tell me what's going on and what the best treatment would be?

Answer: The white powdery substance is probably the residue of a white fly infestation. Do you see small white insects flying around when you disturb the foliage? They are hard to control. Spraying with an Acephate spray, directing the spray at the underside of the leaves, several times at about a 7-day interval will help eradicate them. I don't know what the web might be. A severe infestation of spider mites can result in webs. Tap a branch sharply on a piece of white paper or cardboard. If you see a lot of small specks moving around on the paper, they are mites. An insect and mite control spray should control them.

14. Question: Can I plant and grow lavender in the house, or do I need to start outside during the spring?

Answer: Lavender will not grow inside and it will be a challenge for you to grow it outside. It must have full sun and extremely well drained soil

15. Question: When is the best time to plant bougainvillea outdoors? I have some in containers and would like to plant them.

Answer: In areas where winter freezes are normally expected it is recommended that bougainvillea be grown in containers. If planted in the ground, the above ground vegetation will be killed and they will spend their time and energy re-growing that vegetation at the expense of blossoms. If you still wish to plant yours in the ground, I recommend that you wait until about mid-February to do it. This will allow them a year of establishing a root system to ensure their survival of a light freeze.