

Let's Talk Gardening

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The Country Gardener

Rain, Rain, Rain

With all the rain this past week and the accidental death of a friend of mine, it's been a real bummer week for me.

My gardening has suffered, too. I got some more broccoli because the warm weather really did a number on the old ones but I haven't been able to get it in the ground yet—too wet. I also got some Brussels sprouts, Coho spinach, and onion sets but none of them are in the ground either. On the positive side, I'm still picking a few tomatoes now and then although all the rain is causing them to be split on the tops. They're still mighty tasty.

On top of that, rain washed away a buncha the mulch I had laid down and now I've gotta do it again—rake it up, carry it back and try to level it out again. Scheesch!

Let me remind you again, from now up through about February is the best time to transplant trees and shrubs because they are normally dormant (Schumacher's Nursery has them on sale right now.) Roots of trees and shrubs bought now are still growing and will continue to grow in our climate. Then, when the hot summer hits again, the plant will have a considerably better chance to make it because it will be well on the way to having its root system established. Be sure to water new shrubs and trees when the soil gets dry down to the second joint on your finger. Look on tree and shrub planting as an investment in your home. One well-placed tree of the right variety can add hundreds of \$\$\$ to the value of your home. If you're planning to plant some trees that will change leaf-color in the fall, now is the time to go to the nurseries to see which transplants have the colors you want. If you can find one with the color you want now, it's very likely to be the same color next fall, too.

Also, you might wanna consider putting in an orange (actually tangerine) tree. Ron and I've been eating fruit from mine for the last month or so and they just keep getting sweeter every day. The Satsumas like it here and can put up with our summers, soils and pests. You'll get fruit in 3-4 years. Satsuma is the tangerine you're looking for and try to find either the Miho or Sito variety. And, no, you can't plant the seeds and grow your own trees. The Satsuma has to be grafted to a root stock to do well here.

Even if the grass slows down its growth, keep mowing it at the same height. Cutting it short for the winter will do more harm than good. Bag the clippings to use in the compost pile with the leaves that you're picking up. Remember that you need some green with the brown when making compost.

If all the rain is bringing the fire ants to the surface, after the rain stops, now is the time to do an area-wide treatment of your lawn. The ants will forage as far as 50 feet from the nest which means that if you broadcast a bait application over the lawn, they'll go out this winter and get it. Next spring, about 95 percent of your ant problems will be gone.

That's all for this week. Have a good turkey day and don't eat too much.

Send your comments and/or questions to gardener@gvtc.com