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**IN THE GARDEN WITH MR. GREENJEANS**

by Randy Arnowitz



Randy – Mr. Greenjeans – resides in a potting shed with 200 orchids and his golden retriever "Peaches." He enthusiastically welcomes your gardening questions; address them to greenjeansmr@verizon.net.

**Leave Them In The Pot**

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

My beautiful new red 'Crimson Parasol' dipladenia started losing its leaves right after I planted it in my garden. It gets full sun and I water it three times per week. The few leaves that are left on it have turned yellow and I'm embarrassed to let my friends see it now. What did I do wrong ?

Signed,  
**Not Seeing Red**



White dipladenias are tougher than they look; allow to dry out somewhat between waterings

in full, hot sun and are very forgiving if you occasionally forget to water them.

They also seem to benefit from being under-potted; that is, kept in undersized containers. In fact, if you purchase one in a five-gallon nursery container, I'd recommend slipping that plastic pot into a decorative one and growing it in there for quite some time. Before long, the thing will double and then triple in size and be perfectly content to remain in the original pot.

I feed mine frequently during the warm months with Peter's, Miracle Gro, compost tea, fish emulsion or whatever else I have around the garden.

The one you bought, 'Crimson Parasol' is relatively new to the nursery trade but is as easy to grow as the pinks and the white varieties and with proper care will reward you with a truly outrageous profusion of blooms.

Back to your question. They're



Dipladenia 'Crimson Parasol' showing off

Dear Not Seeing,

Dipladenias are one of the easiest, showiest and most satisfying plants to grow in your garden. But, and this is a big but; you have to grow the darn things in pots and not in the ground. Probably the reason for this is because they seem to need really good drainage and to dry out slightly between waterings.

This is a good thing though, because dipladenias are really the perfect container plant. They thrive



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usually slow to bring back from the 'no leaves' stage you describe, so bite the bullet, buy a new one to keep in a container and be a little more cautious about the watering.



Pink jasmine eventually needs to be "started over"; cut it to the ground when it covers your house

**Dear Mr. GreenJeans,**

There is nothing like the fragrance of my pink jasmine vine. This year it bloomed especially heavily but it has become woody at the bottom and is full of thatch. It would take me forever to untangle the mess and thin it out. I don't want to dig it out and start another one. What do you think I should do?

Sincerely,  
**Tangled Up**

**Dear Tangled,**

Pink jasmine (*Jasminum polyanthum*) is a popular Santa Barbara standby. Vigorous and easy to grow, this sweet-smelling bloomer will eventually cover your trellis, fence, house, driveway, car, dog...

To keep this from happening, every few years or when it begins to get out of control, simply cut your vine either to the ground or leave a foot or two above the soil level. Do this in the spring after it blooms and throw some healthy food on it. GroPower works, as does an E.B. Stone all-purpose fertilizer. Water in the food and continue giving your vine regu-

lar deep soaks. Before long you can train the new shoots up your trellis or fence and the thing will be up and blooming by the following winter.

**Dear Mr. GreenJeans,**

This might be a dumb question but why is it that so many people rake or blow all the mulch and organic matter out of their gardens and citrus and avocado orchards? I thought plants don't like that.

Signed,  
**Puzzled on Picacho**

**Dear Puzzled,**

That is a really good question and to tell you the truth, I have always been puzzled by this. The only thing I can figure is that some folks miss the dust bowl days. Oh yeah, it also keeps a lot of people employed here in Santa Barbara.

Using a blanket of mulch in your

garden conserves soil moisture, inhibits weeds and makes them easier to pull and keeps plant roots cool. I cannot think of one plant, hedge, flower, shrub, or even cactus that wouldn't thrive with an insulating layer of compost, mulch or garden "litter" over its roots. Roses especially will flourish almost overnight when you give up "the raking thing" and cover their roots with compost. Some trees, such as avocados, actu-

ally prefer their roots to be covered by a thick layer of their own leaves.

A couple of exceptions would be if you have diseased rose leaves or camellia flowers infected with petal blight in your garden, these should be raked up and disposed of.

Seriously, I guess some people's idea of a clean and tidy garden is a raked or blown garden but, uhhh-hmmm, other than that, you got me on this one. Readers: any ideas? *My*

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