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## Elaine vs. Ellamae

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

Every winter, the foliage on some of the agapanthus in my garden – particularly the ones with the dark blue or violet flowers – turn yellow and mushy, while the plants with the lighter blue flowers stay intact. I usually trim away the nasty leaves from the worst looking plants and then, when the weather starts to warm up, new, healthy growth comes up and the plants recover. What's going on?

Signed,  
Concerned in Carp



"Semi-deciduous" *Agapanthus 'Ellamae'* is more likely to turn yellow and mushy in the winter than *A. 'Elaine'*, an "evergreen"

Populations peak in summer, and summer and fall flowers are most likely to be damaged. The mites feed inside the buds, killing them or causing a rosette-like growth of the resulting foliage, flowers and fruit.

Since this pest is probably not going to significantly reduce your crop yield (I mean how many lemons can a person *really* use?), I'd say simply remove and throw away the mutant fruit. You can also try applying an oil spray to the trees before flowering or inoculating them with beneficial mites that will help conquer and destroy the bad mites.



These lemons could have been misshapen by alien invaders but the most likely culprit is the citrus bud mite

## Alien Invasion?

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

My lemon tree has some extremely freaky-looking, misshapen fruit on it. Is this caused by a disease or has an alien life force taken up residence in my tree?

Signed,  
Sour in San Roque

Dear Sour,

I would not completely rule out an alien life force, but a little bug called citrus bud mite, or *Eriophyes sheldoni*, most likely caused your freaky fruit. This coastal-lemon pest is very small, elongated and somewhat tapered at the posterior end, and has four legs at the front end near the mouth. Adult females lay about 50 eggs mostly in the bud scales of recent growth.

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I really like the plant known as "horsetails" and was going to plant it in my perennial garden but my neighbor told me that it can be very invasive. Is that true?

Signed,  
**Bjorn Yesterday**

Dear Bjorn,

Let's just say if you plant horsetails



Hornsetails are extremely invasive plants and once they've taken hold even sheared into a hedge is not a good look, so Mr. Greenjeans' advice is to keep them potted

(*Equisetum hyemale*) in your garden, it will be the end of your gardening life as you know it. This plant is *very* invasive and unless you want it everywhere and I mean *everywhere*, you should only grow it in containers or cutout areas of a patio. Here are a few facts about horsetails:

- dates back to the Carboniferous period where it grew to over 40 feet tall
    - like ferns, horsetails do not flower but rather reproduce by spreading or by spores
      - also commonly called scouring rushes, the stems contain silica and for centuries the plant was used for polishing or scouring tin, cooking utensils, barrels and suits of armor

- when grown in farm ponds can cause equisetosis, a serious poisoning in horses
- since they tend to absorb heavy metals, they are useful as monitors of water and soil contamination by zinc, cadmium and lead
- makes a striking vertical accent plant in a container but can grow to 5 or 6 feet  
Doesn't look so good when sheared into a hedge

Let's review. In the ground: very invasive and hard to get rid of. In an enclosed space or container: makes an interesting vertical statement. To summarize: unless you really have a lot of medieval armor to polish, I'd probably choose a more manageable perennial for your garden.

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