

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.



Burned and Scorched Camellias

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I am sending you a few photos of the camellias in my garden. The problem is that they are all burned and scorched looking. They get plenty of sun as I have them growing on my walkway against a nice, hot, sunny wall. Also, they are watered by a drip system and I have fed them. Could it be over feeding? What do you think?



Camellia japonica will yellow and scorch in full, reflected sun

Burned Up In Birnam

Dear Burned Up,

The reason your camellias are “burned and scorched looking” is because they are burned and scorched. Even well irrigated *Camellia japonica* growing in full reflected sun will be toast before long. This type of camellia thrives in bright shade, filtered, or morning sun.

On the other hand *Camellia sasanqua* can take sun to part shade but even these babies would probably burn a little if planted against a reflective wall.

If your camellias are young plants you should relocate them to a cooler, more appropriate area of your garden.

Thin Is Not In

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I have a small garden problem that is driving me crazy. Every year during the cooler months, my usually lush and thick sod lawn thins out in places and gets all muddy. This happens especially in the areas that get less sun. Have any ideas for how to avoid this from happening?

Signed,

Too Thin on Summit

Dear Too Thin,

Yours is not an uncommon problem. As you described, this generally happens to sun-loving turf such as Marathon and Marathon II that gets a bit more shade in the winter than in the summer. As a result, these areas stay wetter and if they are in a high foot traffic area the problem gets even muddier and the soil tends to become hard and compacted.

Here are a few suggestions that may help with the problem:

- If there are low-branching trees directly above the lawn, careful and thoughtful thinning of the canopy may help the problem.

- If you have an irrigation timer, check to make sure it has been adjusted to accommodate the cooler weather. If the problem areas of your lawn are on a separate station than the sunnier sections, reduce either the duration or frequency of the irrigation for that zone to eliminate the soggy conditions.

- Reseeding the thinned out areas and lightly covering them with a fine seed cover will also help to thicken up the lawn. If the area is too dark though, this may not help. However, if you do this in the spring when the weather warms up, the patches will fill in before you know it and you should have another season of a perfect lawn.

If none of this works it could be that the area is just too shady to support your existing turf. If that’s the case, you can mix a shadier groundcover such as the clover-like dichondra into your lawn or install an informal flagstone path in the heaviest foot traffic areas.

A Shaggy Situation

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I have a stand of lily turf growing beneath my Japanese maples in the Asian section of my garden. Between the snails and the dogs the stuff is looking very ragged and worn out. Can I cut this plant back? If so, when is a good time?

Yours,

Shaggy in Summerland

Dear Shaggy,

You can cut your lily turf (*Liriope muscari*) down but I think you might be a little late for this season. I’ve



Liriope muscari will come up strong and bloom if cut back in early spring

found that the best time is right after it starts pushing out its new growth in late winter or early spring. The key is to chop it back while the new growth is still coming up out of the ground so you can cut back the old leaves without harming the fresh, new ones.

I did mine about a month or so ago and then threw on some organic fertilizer to speed up the process. I have to say it’s looking mighty fine right now.

I’ve never cut back liriope this late, but I suspect that it will grow back with the old and the new growth looking sheared. Try giving a few clumps a haircut and see what happens.

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