

IN THE GARDEN

WITH MR. GREENJEANS

by Randy Arnowitz

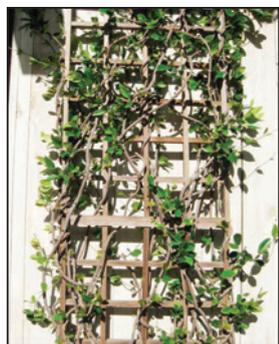
Randy – Mr. Greenjeans – resides in a potting shed with 200 orchids and his golden retriever “Peaches.” He enthusiastically welcomes your gardening questions; address them to greenjeansmr@verizon.net.

Mystery Plant

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I am sending you a picture of this variegated plant I have growing alongside my driveway. I think it is some sort of grass plant but it is not doing well. It receives full sun and some irrigation but it constantly turns brown and looking burned. Any idea what this plant is and why it doesn't thrive?

Sincerely,
Bernie Blades
East Mountain Drive



Star jasmine cut to the wood, fingers crossed; one month after severe pruning, star jasmine is popping



This “Golden Sword” is not so golden...



Baumea rubiginosa 'Variegata' requires regular water to look its best

Dear Bernie,

The sedge-like perennial that is trying to grow along your driveway is Baumea rubiginosa 'Variegata,' commonly called Variegated Striped Rush or Golden Sword. This New Zealand native can grow 18-24 inches tall in your garden.

I've found that this plant requires more than average water to flourish. It should be grown in consistently moist, well-draining soil and will get brown and nasty looking if allowed to dry out between waterings.

Considering that it will thrive in sun or bright shade and judging by your photo and description, I'd say that a hot, reflected area near a driveway might be too harsh for this one to grow happily; especially if not given adequate water.

I've grown baumea in containers in water gardens and they enthusiastically reached three feet tall with all that water. After a year or two they outgrew their pots and I sawed the rootballs in half, repotted them and gave away the extras.

Star Jasmine Revival
Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I have some very ancient star jasmine vines growing up the posts around my garage. Although they are healthy-looking and very green, they have gotten fat, “woggy,” overgrown,

and probably have rats and other things living in them. I don't really want to dig them out and I'm a little shy about chopping them down and I don't want them to die. Mostly I'd just like to start them over somehow and make them look good again. How far into the old wood can I cut? Will the plants come back or die off? What do you think?

Signed,
Scared on Sycamore Canyon

Dear Scared,

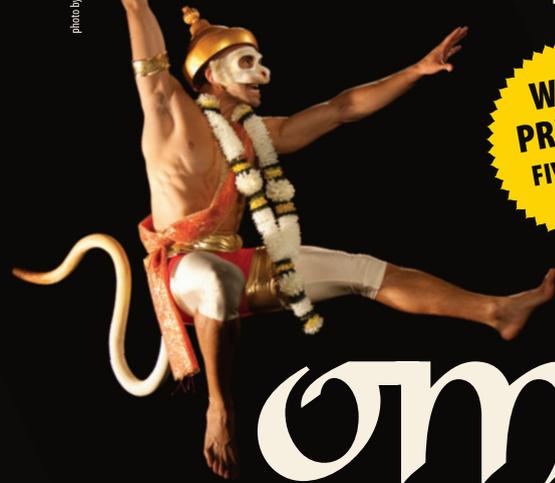
Well, to tell you the truth, until recently I wasn't really too sure how much you could hack back a very mature “woggy” star jasmine (Trachelospermum jasminoides) vine. However, a month or so ago I did chop back a few very old vines for a client. The vines were about three feet deep (fat?) and many feet tall.

First I watered the vines deeply. The following week I apprehensively approached one of the vines, said a little personal prayer and threw a handful of organic fertilizer over my right shoulder. Then I cut through all the outer green parts and through the leafless, skinny stems and vine-lets until I got down to the oldest wood still entwined around the original trellis. I thinned out and untangled some of these and totally removed anything that I thought was dead. With that done, I did the same with rest of them.

Now, only a month later I see many healthy shoots popping out all over the place like squiggly green worms. Some are short and some are long and twiny. All are vibrant green and emanating from that very old, thick wood. Ain't nature grand?

MA

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