

IN THE GARDEN WITH MR. GREENJEANS

by Randy Arnowitz



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Eaten Alive

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

Lately, plants in my garden that before had never been bothered by pests are being eaten like crazy. My star jasmine that I didn't think anything would eat is being chewed down to the ground and my potted dipladenias are shredded. Since both of these plants have white sticky sap, I would've guessed they'd be somewhat toxic. The strange thing is that there are no remains lying about anywhere near. What do you make of this plant poltergeist?

Signed,
Baffled On Barker Pass

Dear Baffled On,

Hah! Funny you should mention this. I was recently having a conversation with plant guru Ray Sodomka at Hessellund Nursery about this very subject. We both came to the conclusion that it must be a new pest that's chowing down on these previously "unchow-able" plants such as your star jasmine and dipladenias.



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.



My perennial favorite – this lobelia is on the menu for squirrels and chipmunks



Dipladenia are fair game for fox squirrels, and they take full advantage!

I can personally report that whoever or whatever is responsible for the devastation, this garden Sasquatch also loves angelonia, nemesia, cosmos, petunias and my personal favorite: perennial lobelia. A friend of mine reported that something is eating his Ceanothus "Yankee Point" and you know that *nothing* touches that stuff.

We wondered whether the culprit might be those new-fangled fox squirrels that seem to be everywhere. Smaller than our California or Western gray squirrel these non-native, rusty red-colored squirrels are native to the eastern and southern states and seem to have a penchant for eating our formerly inedible ornamentals and for playing chicken with Range Rovers and Hummers on the quiet, shady



Impatiens may be less likely to be grazed by fox squirrels

lanes and streets of Montecito.

My guess as to why they leave no evidence at the crime scene is that they could be taking the goods back to their nests.

What to do? Well, bird netting doesn't work and the varmints can leap onto hanging baskets suspended from the eaves. I'd suggest that you keep trying other plants. Impatiens, daylilies, freeway daisy, teucrium and ivy geraniums might be safe but overall it's a sad state of affairs. Sometimes a guy just has to have some lobelia in his life.

Plumeria Problems

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I love growing plumeria and have pretty good luck with them in unglazed terra cotta containers on my patio wall. However, when I transplant them into the garden they often rot out and die. Why would this hap-

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pen? I water and feed them the same whether they are in the ground or in pots. I hope you know the answer to this.

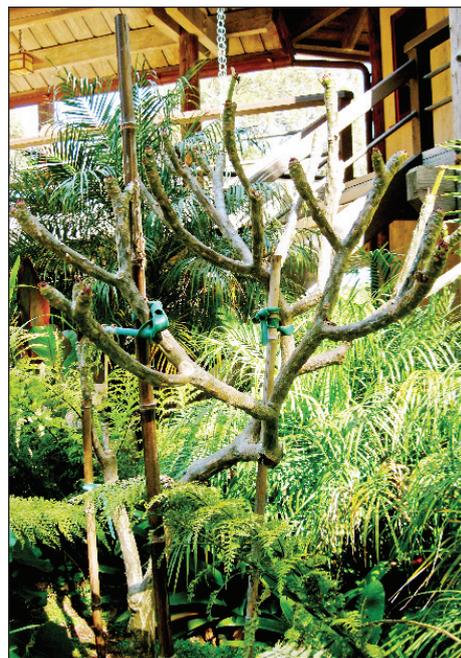
Signed,
Plumarily Challenged on Picacho

Dear Challenged,

This is what I think is going on here. First of all, since the stems and branches of plumeria are pretty fleshy – almost succulent in nature – they tend to like to dry out a bit between waterings. If you continually water them when they are already moist, there's good chance that eventually they're going to die out.

In containers, especially terra cotta ones, your plants probably have a chance to dry out before you water them again.

If you are watering them as frequently after you put them in the garden they probably do not have time to dry out, especially if your garden soil has clay in it.



Plumeria can be a little "iffy" when planted in the ground; they're easier to grow in containers

When I've grown these fragrant beauties myself I always keep them potted and try to move them out of the rain in the cooler months when they're even more susceptible to rotting out.

Not So Rosy

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I've noticed a peculiar phenomenon in my rose garden this year. I seem to have a lot of short, shrubby growth all over the bushes that does not terminate in flowering stems. It's very weedy looking and even some of the longer, more promising stems have stubby ends where buds should be. I've always had a little of this type of growth, especially if I've deadheaded or pruned them improperly, but this year there is much more of it. What is going here and what do I do about it?

Signed,
Everything's Not Coming Up Roses In San Roque

Dear Everything's Not,

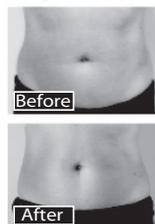
You are very astute. This shrubby, dead-ended, never-going-to-amount-to-anything, "my husband was right, we should get rid of these roses because they're too much trouble" type of growth on your roses is commonly called "blind growth."

I too have seen a little of it on roses and it seems that certain roses are prone to it over others. This season however, there does seem to be a lot of it around. There are lots of explanations for this online if you Google "roses blind growth" but one theory is that it can be caused by a sudden drop in temperature in the spring when temperatures are warming up or a sudden rise in temperature in the fall after it begins to get cooler.

You can either try deadheading this growth as you would a spent flower by cutting it back to a 5-leaflet leaf with the hope that it will re-grow and give you a bloom or remove it completely to thin out the shrub. *My*

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