

Sad Bougies

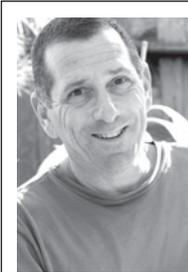
Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I have three large potted bougainvilleas growing on my patio in full sun. They are the tall-growing vining type and are staked up so they grow vertically. The pots are approximately fifteen-gallon size and I think I got these "bougies" around five years ago. My question is this: When I originally bought them they were green and healthy and covered in gorgeous flowers. Now after all this time, they are tired and spindly-looking with few leaves and even fewer flowers. What do you think could be wrong with them? I water them regularly but they don't look happy. I would get new plants just to get that color back. Any ideas?

Signed,
Anita Moore Blooms



"Bougies" get tired after a few years in containers



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.

Dear Anita,

I think you answered your own question. In the ground an established bougainvillea is a vigorous, easy-to-grow plant. In a container however, after a few years in captivity, they, as you said, get tired – tired of being confined to a pot when what they really



Think of container-grown bougainvilleas as annuals that give you a few long seasons

want is to send a big ol' taproot out and down into the earth. In fact if you set a potted bougie directly in your garden, it will eventually send that root right out through the drainage hole and into the ground. You would then see that it would flourish and do that wild and crazy bougainvillea thing.

To keep your potted bougainvilleas healthy and full of blooms while in a container, try cutting them back in the spring and feeding them regularly during the warm months.

As you probably know, in the garden, bougainvillea can be a very drought-resistant plant, requiring little or no water once established. In a pot though, they can only rely on you for their water. Therefore, do not let yours get bone dry between waterings but rather soak thoroughly when they approach dryness.

If you can't resist growing bougainvillea on your patio in containers try selecting some of the more compact, low-growing varieties. With good care, these will give you that flashy color you crave for a longer period of time. Keep in mind though, that after a few years, even those will welcome their freedom when liberated from confinement.

Sometimes it helps to think of container-grown bougainvilleas as annuals that give you a few really long seasons. After that, when they start to look sad simply recycle by planting them in your or a friend's garden and treat yourself to a few new fresh ones.

Hungry Citrus Trees

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I have a drought garden that has ceanothus, Spanish lavender and Mexican sage growing in it. The whole thing is on a drip system and my new citrus trees are also on the drip. Each tree has a couple of emitters on it but the water tends to run off the surface of the soil and away from the trees. I'm starting to think it may not be enough water for them, as they are beginning to turn yellow and the fruit is dropping off. What do you think I

should do to save my citrus? Thanks.

Signed,
Lem N. Lymes

Dear Lem,

First of all, it would help to know how often and for how long you are running your irrigation system, but either way I can take a stab at the problem.

Drip irrigation can be an okay method of watering for some plant material but in my experience for other stuff it just doesn't seem to do the job.

Citrus, for example, has lots of surface feeder roots that like to be kept cool and evenly moist. That translates to mean a snugly blanket of compost or some other mulch underneath the tree should be used and the entire area out to the drip line occasionally and deeply soaked.



Putting a berm around your citrus helps direct the food and water down to the roots

When you stick a couple of emitters under a citrus tree or any tree for that matter it probably isn't going to get that entire area saturated.

Also, since citrus like to be fed regularly during the warm months, if you scatter some nice, organic food under your tree – those few dripping emitters are not going to dissolve the fertilizer and send it down to the roots.

Okay, I'm done yelling at you, so now I'll tell you what to do to fix the problem.

Build a sturdy berm around each citrus tree with the emitters from the drip line on the inside of the berm. Add a few more if needed depending on how long the system will be run for.

An alternative would be to use the berm method but plug the emitters and fill the well around the tree with a hose when needed instead of relying on the irrigation timer to determine when it's time to water.

When using a berm around your tree you can more easily keep your tree properly irrigated and fed by insuring that the food and water are getting down to where the roots actually are instead of the watering from the emitters trickling over the surface of the soil and away from where its needed.

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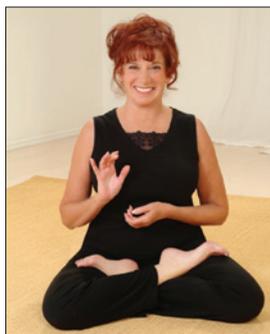
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