

1. (Feb.) I received an amaryllis for Christmas. Will it bloom again?

Amaryllis will bloom again with the proper care. Amaryllis are from the tropics. This region does not have seasons like we do, only a rainy and dry season. The plant grows vigorously (vegetatively) during the rainy season, then enters a dormancy or rest period during the dry season, and resumes growth accompanied by a flowering stalk when the rainy season resumes. In order to get your plant to bloom again, try to mimic this tropical wet-dry cycle. The vegetative growth period is critical for the amaryllis bulb to store up enough energy to bloom the next season. Around here, consider the growing period to be May through August. During this time, keep the plant moist; do not allow it to dry out between watering. Keep the plant in a sunny location (dappled shade, not blazing NM sun will do). Fertilize ever 2 to 3 irrigations with a houseplant fertilizer. In early September, reduce watering enough to allow the foliage to die back. Store the plant in a cool place (55-60 degrees F). Don't allow the soil to become completely dry, but water very sparingly. The flower stalk will appear in spring. Increase watering slightly. Once foliage appears, resume watering and fertilizing. Repeat the process every year and re-pot the Amaryllis every few years.

2. (Feb.) How do I get started making compost?

Composting is quite simple, but the options may seem overwhelming. When we compost we are simply facilitating fast decomposition of materials. There is heap composting (making large piles of yard and kitchen waste), pit or trench composting (putting kitchen waste in small holes in your garden and covering with soil), and vermicomposting (enlisting the help of worms). Which method you chose depends on the space available to you and how much waste you have access to. For people who live in apartments or have very small yards, vermicomposting makes sense. This only requires a small bin. If you have lots of yard waste, a compost pile makes sense. For a pile, accumulate enough yard and kitchen waste to make a 3x3x3 ft pile. Try to balance the carbon-rich and nitrogen-rich materials in a 30:1 ratio (by weight). In other words, put mostly dry crunchy stuff (like dry leaves) with a little green luscious stuff (like leftover lettuce). Keep the pile moist (covering it helps with this) and turn it often. This pile will eventually decompose to a dark-colored pleasant-smelling material that is unrecognizable as the original material. There is a lot more to learn about composting and the problems you could encounter. For more information, visit: <http://bernalilloextension.nmsu.edu/mastercomposter/>
Vermicomposting - <http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/h/h-164.pdf>
Backyard Composting - <http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/h/h-110.pdf>

3. (Feb.) What vegetable seeds can I plant now?

February is too early in the year to plant many vegetables sensitive to freezing temperatures. However, it is not too early to start planting certain garden vegetables. Even for the cold hardy vegetables, wait until Feb 15th to sow seeds. If you are not using any season-extension techniques, such as floating or hoop-supported row covers, your options are hardy vegetables such as peas, carrots, spinach, leeks, onions, parsnips, celery, turnips, and radishes.

Some additional information may be found at:

http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/circ457.pdf

http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/circ457B.pdf

4. (Feb.) I need a pre-emergent to control spurge around flagstone that has desired grass around them.

Positive identification of the spurge is necessary. I would require a photograph or a sample to verify the ID. Once the ID is verified, the next step is to understand the site in which the spurge is growing. This question does not provide enough information to choose an herbicide. We need to know what kind of grass is the “desired” grass. Once we figure this out, a pre-emergent herbicide may be available that is labeled for use on the particular grass in the particular landscape setting. To answer a question like this, the County Agent should be consulted. The Agent would need the information I previously mentioned and she will input this information into several pesticide databases to find out if an appropriate chemical option is available.

A non-chemical approach to spurge management is to promote a thick, healthy stand of grass. The spurge will be out-competed in this situation. Also, these weeds are annuals. Hand-pulling on a regular basis (before seed formation) will be quite effective at reducing next year’s population of spurge.

5. (Feb.) Purchased “Elephant Ears” from a nursery in the Mid-west. They are rated to Zone 7. Will they survive here?

First of all, I will assume that we are talking about *Alocasia* spp., which is commonly referred to as elephant ears. This plant will not do well if planted outside in Albuquerque. Albuquerque is considered to be zone 7, but there are a few other things working against the elephant ears. These plants don’t tolerate freezing, dry and windy conditions, and they prefer acid soils. Enough said. We have all of the conditions the plant does not tolerate.

6. (Feb.) Can miniature roses be grown outside, and are they winter hardy?

Yes. Miniatures can be grown outside in Albuquerque. In fact, they withstand the cold weather better than hybrid teas.

7. (Early March.) When should I plant my flowers – annuals?

Sow the seeds of annuals and/or transplant annuals after the last frost. This is, on average, around April 15th in the Albuquerque area. This date will be later in the East Mts. (mid-May) and later in the valley (early May). Watch the weather forecast to get a better idea of what to expect in a particular year. Adjust planting accordingly. Hardy annuals, such as pansy and ornamental cabbage (grown as an annual, but it is actually biennial), may be transplanted earlier. These plants can withstand freezing temperatures.

8. (March) If I have dead stone fruit trees killed by borers among my other living fruit trees, should I remove the dead ones? Can I stack the wood for use in the fireplace?

Before discussing borers, one common disease that affects stressed and/or aging stone fruit trees is Cytospora. Cytospora is a fungus that enters the trees via a wound or pruning cut. Symptoms include sap oozing out of branches with no apparent wound or boring insect hole associated with it. Branch dieback will also occur. If Cytospora is present in your trees, there is no cure. Keep the plants well-watered and prune out dead and dying branches until the tree is no longer acceptable.

One of my pet peeves is the general use of the term “borers”. I prefer not to use this term so generally. It is important to know what kind of borer and understand its biology to help determine the best course of action. Most borers will attack trees that are stressed or “devitalized” in some way. For example, trees that are not adequately watered, have girdling roots, or are not suited to our hot and dry climate are under stress. Just like humans are more likely to get the flu when they are under stress, trees are more likely to attract pests when they are under stress. The best way to prevent borers is to keep your trees healthy, well-watered, mulched, plant trees suited to our environment, and prune out dead and dying branches. No other measures need to be taken.

In this case, since the trees are stone fruit trees I will assume we are dealing with the peach tree borer. Peach tree borers are the exception in that they will attack perfectly healthy, non-stressed stone fruit trees.

Removing the dead tree is not necessary unless it is a hazard or an eye-sore. Since peach tree borers are not specifically attracted to stressed and dying trees, I would not be concerned about my dead stone fruit tree attracting more peach tree borers to my property.

If the other trees on the property are not stone fruit trees, then there is no need to worry because peach tree borers will not attack them.

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If the other trees on the property are stone fruit trees, then some action should be taken. Apply a preventative spray to all the living stone fruit trees on the property. Use something with the active ingredient Spinosad. Apply only to the lower two feet of the trunk starting in mid – to late July and keep coverage through August. This means re-applying the Spinosad product every 7 to 10 days (per the label). Please read and follow the label of the product that you decide to use. If this is done every year, the peach tree borer will not infest your healthy trees.

To prevent other kinds of borers from attacking your trees, try to minimize stress to the trees by keeping them well watered and mulched.

Stacking the firewood from the dead tree is perfectly fine.

9. (March) My pine tree (not sure of type) is getting yellow needles. Should I start watering it now that winter is gone?

It is useful to identify the type of pine tree that is in question. Without this information, I will discuss some general thoughts on the matter. Several things can make pine needles turn yellow or brown. In the fall and sometimes in the spring, pine trees will shed older needles. This is completely normal. The whole tree will have a patch of completely brown needles about 10 to 15 inches in from the tips of the branches. If you touch these browning needles, they will detach very easily from the tree and you will have a handful of dead needles.

If the needles at the very tips of the branches are turning yellow or brown, there is some kind of stress on the tree. It is also important to know the pattern of yellowing. Are the needles yellowing from the tips inward or are there yellow bands on the needles? Needles browning from the tips inward are indicative of water and/or heat stress. Needles with yellow banding may have a foliar fungal infection.

Without knowing more specific information, it is impossible to answer this question. A photograph or sample would be very helpful in this situation.

To answer the watering question. . . yes! Trees (evergreen and deciduous alike) should be watered year-round, even in the winter. Water trees deeply at the drip-line. In other words, soak water in from the surface of the soil (avoid those deep-root waters) to a depth of 15 to 20 inches or so. The only thing that varies throughout the year is the frequency of watering. During the winter, you may need to water only once or twice. You simply want to prevent the roots from completely drying out over the winter. You also want the tree to have moisture to draw from immediately in the spring as the weather warms up. Keep an eye on your tree and also feel the soil a few inches deep. If your tree looks stressed and/or the soil feels “bone dry” it’s time definitely time to water! You’ll learn through trial and error how long to run the irrigation and how often to water your trees. I have a few more tips and tricks to share with folks. Just give me a call or an e-mail and we can discuss this more.

10. (March) I've had codling moths on my apple trees before. What should I spray with, and when? When to hang up the traps?

Codling moths are not simple to control. Their development is tied to temperature and they produce several generations per year. The timing of their activity varies from year to year because the temperature varies from year to year. Here are a few options for management.

- Do nothing
- Install maggot barriers. These look like panty-hose footies. Put on each apple you want to keep worm-free when they are only dime- to quarter-size.
- Hang a pheromone sticky trap out when trees are in full bloom. This may trap out enough of the male moths to provide more worm-free apples than doing nothing.
- Spray (use product with active ingredient Spinosad) 4 times about 10 to 14 days apart starting 2 weeks after petal fall. This method may be more effective some years depending on the temperatures. Other years, the spray times may be out of sync with the moth's life-cycle.
- Hang a pheromone sticky trap when the trees are in full bloom. Monitor it for codling moth daily. Record daily temperature maximum and minimum. Calculate degree days. Spray 250 to 300 degree days after biofix. Spray again at 1250 to 1310 degree days after biofix. For more information visit:
<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7412.html> or contact the County Extension Office for more information on what biofix is and for more details on monitoring.

11. (March) What soil amendments should I put in when I'm planting my new fruit trees?

This is the easiest question to answer. . . nothing. If the tree is bare-root, simply dig a shallow and wide hole, spread the roots out in the hole, fill it in with the same soil you took out, and water it in. Ensure that the shallowest root is no deeper than 1 inch below the soil. Planting a tree too deeply can be detrimental. After filling in the hole and watering, poke your shovel handle in the watery hole a few times to remove air bubbles. Mulch.

If the tree is containerized, the best thing one can do to give a new tree the best start in life is to inspect the root ball after removing the tree from the container.

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Take a hand fork, hand cultivator, or pruning shears and work around the entire root ball from the outside in (tear it apart). Straighten out any twisted roots without breaking them. If you can't straighten them without breaking them, prune them off so that they are relatively straight. After working through the entire root ball (expect to spend an hour or so on this), correcting any root flaws, plant as I described for the bare root tree.

12. (March) I think my soil is “bad.” How can I get it tested?

Soil is complex. Soil is the foundation of our gardens. If you have a problem, such as excess salts or sodium, this can greatly reduce the health of your plants and it is a frustrating experience. Getting your soil tested, even if there is no apparent issue, is a good idea. A soil test will shed light on the nutrient status, pH, texture, etc. of your soil. You will know whether applying fertilizer or amendments is actually needed. I recommend sending a sample to the New Mexico State Soil Water and Agricultural Testing Lab (SWAT Lab). This will cost \$26 for a standard test. Collect a “composite” sample from the area of concern. This means collecting a scoop of soil from at least 5 sites in your yard. Always scoop the soil to the same depth (be consistent). Take the samples from the depth that your plants' roots are experiencing. I recommend sampling to a depth of about 0-6 or 0-8 inches. Don't collect any surface litter, push that aside first. Mix together all 5 “subsamples” and scoop 2 cups worth out. Send this to the SWAT lab for analysis.

For more detailed instructions on soil sampling and the SWAT Lab sample submission form, visit: http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_a/a-114.pdf & [http://swatlab.nmsu.edu/Forms/GIM Soil Sample Submit Form.pdf](http://swatlab.nmsu.edu/Forms/GIM%20Soil%20Sample%20Submit%20Form.pdf)

Publication a-114 is slightly outdated. The publication instructs you to bring the soil sample to your County Agent. This is no longer the protocol. Simply mail the sample directly to the SWAT Lab.

13. (March) What type of grapes should I plant here in Alb?

Please see the following NMSU publication :
http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/circ483.pdf

Some questions to ask yourself are, “What time of year do I want my grapes to ripen, early-, mid-, or late- season? What color berry do I want, black, red, white, golden, green? What do I want to use the grapes for, table grapes, making wine, making juice?” Once you hone in on your objective, this can help narrow down your choices of what to plant. The second important consideration is whether you have a suitable site to plant grapes. Grapes prefer full sun and well-drained soil. If you do not have a suitable site, plant something else instead. Finally, American x European hybrids combine the cold-hardiness and alkalinity tolerance of the American and European varieties respectively. If possible, try to choose an American x European hybrid.

14. (March) When and how should I prune my roses?

How to prune roses depends on the type that you have (climbing, floribunda, or hybrid tea). Please refer to NMSU publication h-165 for detailed information on rose care are diagrams on pruning each type. <http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/h/h-165.pdf>

In general, garden roses do not go fully dormant, so it is important to prune them 2 weeks to 1 month before the last killing frost. So, this means you would prune them anywhere from mid-March to the beginning of April. If you prune in the fall or winter and then we experience a warm spell, the roses may vigorously resume growth (pruning stimulates growth) only for the tender new growth to be killed back by frost.

15. (March) Can poinsettias be grown again to bloom? How? Are they hardy?

Poinsettias are not cold hardy. In fact, the coldest zone they can handle is 10! Avoid exposing them to cold drafts in your house. Even this can shorten its life. They can be coaxed into blooming again, but it's not easy. Here is a publication from NMSU with extensive information on poinsettias, <http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/h/H-406.pdf>. In summary, after tiring of the poinsettia plant after the holidays, gradually withhold water until the leaves wither and die and finally the colorful bracts wither and die as well. Put the plant in a cool, dry, dark place until spring. In the spring, take the plant out of storage and trim the stems to about 6 inches. Repot the plant in fresh potting soil. Place in a warm sunny spot in your house. After all danger of frost, take the pot outside and sink it into a warm, lightly shaded flower bed (don't take the plant out of the pot). Keep it well watered and fertilized. As fall weather approaches, take the plant back inside and place in a sunny location. In late September or early October ensure the plant receives total darkness for 14 hours a day for 4 weeks. During the day, place in a sunny and warm location. The poinsettia should develop colorful bracts for the holidays!

16. (April) When do I spray for the pine tip moth?

Pine tip moths feed on and destroy new growth (terminals) of pines. If you suspect infestation has occurred, look for red-brown dying branch tips. Snap off one of these tips and look for a small reddish-colored caterpillar living inside the shoot. This is the pine tip moth larvae.

However, the best time to spray for the pine tip moth in Albuquerque is (before you notice any damage) the **last week of April and again the last week in June**. Before you spray, consider a few things. The moth is not a strong flyer and won't fly over about 15 feet. If you have a large pine tree that taller than 15 feet, spraying is not necessary at all. Also, consider the type of pine you have before you spray. The pines which the moth prefers to infest are: Ponderosa, Afgan, Austrian, Scots, Mugho, and Japanese black pines. Piñon pines are less likely to be infested.

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Some recommended insecticides are permethrin or imidacloprid. The Permethrin will need to be sprayed. The imidacloprid (ex: Bayer Advanced Tree and Shrub) is systemic and it is applied to the soil. Apply imidacloprid 4 to 6 weeks before you need it to be effective. The chemical is slow to translocate throughout the tree. Please read and follow all pesticide label instructions.

17. (April) We have Leland Cypress trees which are 20+ yrs. old. The bark is splitting and oozing out rust-colored ooze. Branches are coming off one-by-one; looking sparse. What is the matter?

I do not recommend planting Leyland cypress in Albuquerque. They grow very fast for 8 or 10 years, then they outgrow the resources available to them and they “crash and burn” quite suddenly. This particular Leyland lived far longer than usual (in our area). One of the common results of this decline is infection with a vascular-plugging fungus such as *Phomopsis* or *Botryosphaeria*. This tree probably has one of these fungal infections and it is in rapid decline. There is nothing that can be done to cure the infection or stop the decline. I recommend replacing this tree with one more suitable to the area.

18. (April) A friend has a large swimming pool room with plants in it that have aphids and whiteflies. Can I close the room up and use a “bug bomb” to kill the insects?

No. A bug bomb is not a good idea for many reasons. First, bug bombs spew tiny droplets of pesticide into the air and these droplets land on the surfaces of everything in the room. These droplets will only land on the upper surfaces of plant leaves. Aphids and whiteflies do not just “hang out” on upper leaf surfaces. Second, the concentration of pesticide in these bug bombs is pretty dilute and not enough to do much to the whiteflies. Third, pesticides must be labeled for the “site” in which they are used. Since this is both a “greenhouse” and a “swimming pool” site, it will be rather hard, if not impossible, to find a bug bomb labeled for both of those sites. What would be a much better idea is purchasing a systemic pesticide with the active ingredient “imidacloprid” labeled for potted houseplants. There are liquid and granular forms that may be applied to the soil. Please follow the label instructions exactly. The plant will take up the pesticide and become poisonous to those sap-sucking pests such as aphids and whiteflies.

19. (April) There are small mushrooms growing at the base of my hibiscus. Will they hurt the bush?

Pathogenic fungus will not manifest itself as large fruiting bodies (mushrooms) at the base of your hibiscus. The particular mushrooms in your yard are decomposing some dead organic material; probably an old root from a nearby stump. More likely, it's decomposing some mulch at the base of the hibiscus. In general, mushrooms

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are considered beneficial soil organisms. The only cautionary note is that many mushrooms are poisonous. If you have a curious dog or child that may feel compelled to eat the mushrooms, you should pluck them and throw them out to prevent any poisonings.

20. (April) Some “animal” is eating my flower bulbs. Don’t think it is a rabbit. What to do?

You may be dealing with damage from rock squirrels or pocket gophers. There are some helpful NMSU publications on both:

Rock squirrels http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/Cr-574.pdf

Pocket gophers http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_I/L-109.pdf

Both mammals create tunnels. Pocket gophers will create mounds of soil and they plug the entrance holes. Rock squirrels leave their tunnels open. If there is no evidence of tunneling, then perhaps rabbits are the culprit. Excluding the pest from your planting area may work well if the planting area is small. Install a 4-foot fence (1/2 or 1/4 inch wire mesh) buried at least 18 inches in the ground. A sheet metal band 16-20 inches wide should be firmly affixed to the wire at the fence top to prevent squirrels from climbing over. If you can identify the pest based on the tunnels, there are more specific controls that may be used (trapping and poison baits). These controls are spelled out in the publications.

21. (April) How do I prune my grape vines?

You should prune your grape vines, like roses, in the spring just a little before the expected last frost (mid- to late-March or early April). Like roses, they can be stimulated to grow by pruning and warm weather.

Pruning is the systematic removal of wood in a manner that will result in a strong vine and good crops of large clusters. Nothing influences grape production more than pruning. Excessive pruning produces vigorous vegetative growth and low yield, but clusters and berries will be large. Not enough pruning produces weak growth and an excessive fruit resulting in small clusters, small berries, and poor quality.

The objective of pruning is to develop a single strong shoot with several well-placed laterals to form a permanent framework. After young vines have been pruned at planting, they are not pruned again until the following spring. Just before growth begins the second year, select the strongest cane and tie it to a stake to form a straight trunk. Remove all other canes.

From this point, training depends upon the system you select. Three of the most common are the head, cordon, and cane (four-arm Kniffin is one example of a cane system). Please see the following publications for diagrams and explanations of each pruning system.

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http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_h/h-303.pdf Pruning Grapes to the Four-Arm Kniffin System

http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/circ483.html Growing Grapes in New Mexico

22. (April) How and when do I plant garlic?

Garlic is planted in the fall and harvested the next summer.

The garlic bulb is segmented into cloves, each of which will produce an individual plant next spring. Garlic grows best in rich, deep, well-drained sandy loam soil. In the fall, plant cloves 3 inches deep and 3 to 6 inches apart in rows. Be sure to plant cloves with the pointed tips facing up. To encourage good leaf development, apply a nitrogen fertilizer along the sides of the rows when plants emerge in the spring. When the lower leaves of the garlic plant start to turn brown in early June, stop irrigating and allow the bulb to mature. In late June or early July, dig the bulbs with a garden fork. Allow bulbs to cure in the shade or braid plants together into a ristra and hang to cure.

There are generally two different types of garlic: those that send up a seed stalk (hardneck varieties) and those that don't (softneck varieties). Hardneck varieties send up a seed stalk with a 'spathe' or paper-like capsule at the top. This spathe contains bulblets about the size of marbles. Bulblets can be planted in the early spring. These will develop into small plants that will produce unsegmented bulbs, called rounds, in the fall. Left undisturbed, a round will produce a segmented bulb the following summer.

http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_h/h-234.pdf Garlic Production in New Mexico.

23. (April) My Ponderosa pine has branch tips that are yellowing and drooping. What should I do to them?

More information is needed to answer this question. Take inventory of where your ponderosa is growing. The yellowing and drooping is a general stress symptom. It could be water and/or heat stress. Is the tree adequately watered (deep soakings at the dripline of the tree)? Is the tree surrounded by concrete paving that makes it impossible to water well? Is the tree over-watered? Was there any recent change to the landscaping, such as conversion to xeriscape in the past few years? Has there been any work done on the property, such as sprinkler work where there may have been trenching and severing of roots? Any of these stresses could show up as yellowing and droopy branch tips. If recent landscape work has severed roots, the only thing to be done is water the tree well and hope it rebounds. If the tree is not being adequately watered, water it. Finally, there may be some circling and girdling roots that are causing the general stress symptoms.

24. (April) My lawn has “white spots” on it. What should I spray it with?

White spots on your lawn sound like fungal growth. You do not need to spray anything on it. If the underlying conditions that encourage fungal growth are not addressed, spraying fungicides is pointless. Fungus thrives in moist, warm conditions. While we can't change the weather, we can change how we irrigate.

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Irrigate early in the morning so the grass leaves have a chance to dry out before nightfall. Make sure you are not over-irrigating. Depending on the type of grass you have, you may need to water 0.5 to 1.0 inch per week spread out over 3 or 4 irrigations. Many people water every day, which is too much. For more information on irrigation of turfgrass, contact the County Extension Office.

25. (April) What is the recipe for hummingbird feeder juice?

Hummingbird solution can be made cheaply and easily at home. It should contain no more than 1 part sugar and 4 parts water. In other words, mix together 1 cup of sugar and 4 cups of water. Boil the mixture for at least 30 seconds for sanitation. Allow to cool and fill your feeder. Caution: Do not use artificial sweeteners, do not use food coloring, and do not use honey!! Artificial sweeteners aren't nutritious for the birds. Food coloring is unnecessary and unhealthy. Honey encourages fungal growth, which can result in a fatal disease for the birds. Be sure to change the solution often (every 2 to 3 days) and sanitize the feeder. Scrubbing the feeder with a vinegar solution is effective. I like to boil a little extra water and rinse the feeder with it for extra sanitation.

26. (May) A gentleman called from the East Mts. and asked what was the white stuff he found an inch or two below the surface in the soil around a dead plant?

That white stuff is fungus, which is considered a beneficial soil organism, working to decompose the dead plant material.

27. (May) I just put in a new tall fescue lawn about 3 weeks ago. It is coming up okay, but now seems to be yellow at the tips, and going down the blade. Used compost. Watering 5 minutes twice a day.

Tall fescue is a cool season grass. This means it thrives in the spring and fall when temperatures are moderate (between 60 and 70 degrees F). Tall fescue is most easily established from seed anywhere from mid-August through mid-September. May is not the optimal time to establish fescue because temperatures will quickly become hot and weed competition is great. However, none of this actually answers the question at hand. I will assume from the wording of the question that this lawn was seeded and not sodded. Yellowing tips could be caused by a few different things; not enough water, compacted soil, salty soil, or improperly prepared soil. Much less likely, there could be a disease at work. Watering 5 minutes twice a day may not be adequate. It is important to be sure the water is actually soaking deep enough in the soil (at least 4 inches). This is easy to determine. Get on your hands and knees with a trowel and dig into the soil under the grass. Is it moist to the touch? How deeply? If the soil is dry only 1 or 2 inches down, watering is insufficient. Perhaps the soil was not properly prepared, meaning de-compacted and organic matter applied. Please see the publication titled "Turfgrass Establishment" for a thorough discussion of how to properly prepare a site for

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turfgrass. The soil could be salty. The only way to determine this is to get a soil test. The NMSU SWAT lab is available for soil testing. Contact the County Agent for more information. Lastly, if there is a disease at work, only trained professionals with the proper lab equipment can diagnose the disease. For more information about submitting samples to the NMSU Plant Diagnostic Clinic, visit <http://aces.nmsu.edu/ces/plantclinic/submission-forms.html> or ask your County Agent.

<http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/h/h-509.pdf> -- Turfgrass Establishment
<http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/h/h-508.pdf> -- Turfgrasses for New Mexico

28. (May) What fertilizer should I put on my lawn, and how often? Is weed-and-feed good?

Fertilizing your lawn is necessary. How and when to fertilize depends on what type of lawn you have, cool-season grass (i.e. tall fescue or Kentucky bluegrass) or warm-season grass (i.e. bermudagrass or buffalograss). The objective is to fertilize the grass when it is actively growing and able to utilize the fertilizer. Warm season grasses are actively growing during the heat of the summer. Cool season grasses are more active in the spring and fall. They are in a “lazy” almost dormant state during the heat of the summer. Regardless of whether you have a warm or cool season grass, the fall fertilizer application does the most good. If you do nothing else, do this. For warm-season grass, the fall application is sometime in October. For cool-season grass, the fall application is at the end of October or beginning of November.

For a typical home lawn situation, choose a fertilizer that is either balanced (ex: 10-10-10) or mostly Nitrogen (ex: 12-0-0 or 29-3-14). However, when applying fertilizer always think in terms of how much Nitrogen you are applying.

Warm-season grass:

Apply 2 to 3 lbs of Nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. per year. In order to do this, you will have to fertilize 2 or 3 times per year. Apply 1/3 of the fertilizer in May, 1/3 in July, and 1/3 in October. Or apply 1/2 in May and 1/2 in October.

For example: if you have a 1000 sq. ft. lawn and you have a 10 lb bag of 12-0-0, you have 1.2 lbs of Nitrogen in that bag. The first number on the bag represents the percentage of nitrogen by weight in the bag. This is all you need for the whole year!!! Take that 10 lb bag and divide it into roughly 2 equal applications.

Cool-season grass:

Apply about 3 to 4 lbs of Nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. per year. Apply 1/4 in March, 1/4 in the beginning of May, 1/4 in September and 1/4 at the end of October. In this instance, you would need a slightly bigger bag of fertilizer than the previous

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example. A 25 lb bag of 12-0-0 has 3 lbs of Nitrogen in it. This 25 lb bag is all you need for the whole year!!!!

For assistance in calculating fertilizer requirements, please contact the County Agent.

Weed-and-feed is not recommended. Weed-and-feeds are fertilizers mixed with broadleaf herbicides. The type of herbicide varies (pre-emergence vs post-emergence or a combination of the two). Trees and shrubs with roots under turfgrass are easily damaged or killed using weed-and-feeds. Also, regularly applying herbicides without properly identifying the weed is not responsible. This encourages herbicide resistant weeds and contributes to environmental pollution.

29. (May) There are many small black spots on my Piñon needles. What is it? How do I get rid of it?

Piñon needle scale is infesting you tree. Scale insects are relatively immobile, protected by a hard or soft “shell”, and pierce and suck their liquid meal from the plant. The good news about this pest is it is specific to piñon trees. The infestation will not spread to other types of plants.

Piñon needle scale has a well-understood life-cycle. This is a great help in managing the pest. The scale lay their cottony-white egg masses on the trunk and lower branches (also check the bottoms of branches) sometime in late winter. These eggs hatch into tiny yellow sausage-shaped “crawlers” that make their way up into the branches and out to the tips where the new growth is. They settle down and become immobile black specks that you can barely see (early spring). They feed all summer and become fatter and fatter. By the fall, you can see them quite clearly as little black “beans” in the needles. They will overwinter in these protective hard casings and emerge in the late winter or early spring. The females crawl down the tree toward the trunk and the males are able to fly. They converge and mate and the females lay their cottony egg masses. The cycle continues.

When you notice the egg masses, take a pinch between your thumb and index finger and squeeze it. If the eggs end up as a yellowish sticky gross mess on your fingers, the eggs have not hatched. This is the perfect time to spray the egg masses off tree with a high-powered nozzle or take a broom or brush and remove the egg masses. Clean up anything that you spray or brush off the tree and dispose of it off-site (put in the garbage can). If you leave the egg masses on the ground, they will still hatch and possibly make their way on to your piñon on tree. If you pinch the egg masses and they are dry and powdery, they have already hatched. At this point, you could spray the tree with a horticultural oil (to smother the crawlers) or an insecticidal soap. Once the crawlers reach the tips of the branches and settle down, they are very hard to kill due to their protective “shell”. Try to catch the scale before this point.

30. (May) I have sand burrs in my lawn. What can I spray them with to get rid of them?

Sandbur is a warm-season annual grass. It is native to Europe and it has become a nuisance here. Annual weeds are much easier to manage than perennial weeds. If you can prevent them from forming seed heads by mowing them off, you will not have a new generation of the weed. However, do expect more sandbur next year despite your efforts due to a build-up of seeds in the soil. If you are persistent at preventing seed-heads from forming for several years, the soil seed bank will be exhausted and this may rid you of the problem. A pre-emergence herbicide applied in early spring before the sandbur germinates may also help control it. However, without knowing the type of grass in the lawn or more about the setting it is impossible to make a specific recommendation. Contact the Extension Agent for more info.

31. (May) My Oleander is sending shoots out from the bottom, but not leafing out at the top. Why?

Oleander can grow well in USDA hardiness zone 8 – 11, some sources indicate 9 – 11. Albuquerque is in zone 7. In other words, oleander does not do well with Albuquerque winters! I suspect the above-ground portion of the plant has been killed off due to the winter weather, but the below-ground portion is still alive. The below-ground portion is sending up new shoots. Prune out the dead shoots and encourage the new shoots to grow, or consider removing this plant and replacing it with one more suited to the Albuquerque climate.

32. (May) What can I use to kill cabbage worms?

Don't be deceived by pretty white butterflies that skip across your cabbage. Adult cabbageworm moths attach yellow, bullet-shaped eggs on the undersides of leaves. Emerging green worms with light stripes down their backs can reach 1 to 1-1/2 inches in length. They leave round or irregular holes in the leaves of cabbage and all species of lettuce.

Control these worms by applying the bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT). Please read and follow all label instructions. This bacteria is relatively host-specific to these types of caterpillars, and to brownish cabbage loopers, which feed on lettuce and cole crops like cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower. The bacteria won't harm other insects or animals.

Before spraying a garden against pests, be sure populations are high enough to warrant such action and clearly identify targeted bugs. If in doubt, contact the County Agent to identify pests and determine the best control methods.

33. (May) When can I transplant my iris?

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It may be a good idea to divide and replant your irises. Late summer is the best time to divide them. That is the time when their summer dormancy is ending and they are preparing to produce new roots.

You can trim the leaf fan back to 3 or 4 inches in length. Use a spade or garden fork to loosen the soil around the irises. Lift them out of the soil with the fork or spade. Break apart the irises. Cut the rhizome (thick horizontal stem that creeps along the ground) so that a single "fan" of leaves remains with only a few inches of rhizome attached. Loosen the soil in the new planting site and amend with compost. Then, plant the rhizomes so that they are at the surface or only half covered. Water them at planting, and thereafter twice per week. As winter arrives, reduce watering to once per month. In late winter, as the irises begin to grow, increase watering to twice per month. Irises are well adapted to dry conditions during the summer, and watering twice per month should be sufficient. Some gardeners water more often, but this is a time of relatively little growth, so don't overwater.

34. (May) Why are my irises not blooming?

There are several things that can cause this problem. The plants may be too crowded. As the irises grow, the clump begins to crowd itself and must be divided. Another possibility is that the surrounding landscape (trees and shrubs) may have grown and begun shading the irises. Fertilization with a fertilizer high in nitrogen will stimulate vegetative (non-flowering) growth rather than flowers. Lack of water in late winter and early spring may also prevent proper growth.

To remedy the problem, determine which of the scenarios described above is most likely to fit your situation.

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When the clump becomes dense (after two to three years), you will need to divide them again. In the meantime, enjoy them as very well adapted xeric plants.

35. (May) How do I get rid of bindweed?

Bindweed is a difficult weed to manage. It is a perennial weed, meaning it persists for many years. The best approach is a combination of mechanical, cultural, biological, and chemical control methods. Frequent hoeing will eventually help weaken the extensive root system. Be careful not to just chop up the root system and spread it around. This will only spread your infestation. Provide shade to the infestation. Bindweed is not shade tolerant. Apply a thick mulch, perhaps cardboard layered with wood chips to deprive the weed of light. A biological control for the weed is bindweed gall mite. You can inoculate your weeds with the mite and after a few years, you may see some control (do not expect quick results). For more info on the bindweed gall mite, see the following publication: <http://tucumcarisc.nmsu.edu/documents/cr-600.pdf>. Finally, chemicals can help control the weed as well. Glyphosate (non-selective systemic herbicide) applied to vigorously growing weeds will provide some control. Please read and follow all herbicide label instructions. Contact the County Agent for other chemical options.

36. (June) Can I plant grass seed now? What kind?

June is an appropriate time to seed warm-season grasses in Albuquerque. Cool-season grasses are better sown in the late summer/fall. Refer to the following table (excerpted from <http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/h/h-509.pdf>) for the correct timing for different grass species.

Grass	Seeding time
<i>Warm-season</i>	
Bermudagrass	May 15 - Aug 1
Blue grama	May 15 - Aug 1
Buffalograss	May 15 - Aug 1
Zoysiagrass	May 15 - Aug 1
<i>Cool-season</i>	
Fine fescue	Aug 15 - Sept 15
Kentucky bluegrass	Aug 15 - Sept 15
Perennial ryegrass	Aug 15 - Sept 15
Tall fescue	Aug 15 - Sept 15

37. (June) How do I choose a turfgrass and establish it?

So, you're starting a new lawn. You need to decide what kind of grass you want, then prepare the soil properly, be sure to irrigate well enough to establish it, then try not to "over love" it with fertilizer.

Here's a nice publication on turfgrasses for our area.

http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_h/h-508.pdf

You have 2 choices, cool-season or warm-season. Cool season grass greens up early and stays green longer, this is what is in the parks all around Albuquerque. The downside is, these grasses take more water than the warm-season kind. The warm-season grasses stay brown longer, but they require less water. The only warm-season grass that can take a lot of traffic (dogs and kids) is bermudagrass. However, this is a very invasive grass. You'll be fighting to keep it out of your planting beds. Once you go bermuda, you CAN'T go back!! The grasses in the publication that are not recommended for home lawns in the Albuquerque area are bentgrass, St. Augustine, and fine fescue is only good in shady locations.

Once you pick your grass, read this publication and follow the recommended soil prep, seeding or sodding dates, fertilization, and watering guidelines:

http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_h/h-509.pdf

If you have trees and shrubs growing in or near your lawn, be careful not to rototill through their roots! If this is the situation, you'll have to "fluff up" the soil amongst the roots by hand to avoid detrimentally damaging your trees and shrubs. There is a critical root zone for trees. If you measure the diameter (in inches) of a tree at breast height and multiply this number by 1.25 and express the results in feet (don't convert anything, just read the result in feet), this is the critical root zone. For example, your tree is 10 inches in diameter at breast height, multiply by 1.25 which equals 12.5. So, try not to rototill within 12.5 feet of the tree trunk. In many cases, this can be the entire yard!

38. (June) My lilac bush has powdery spots on its leaves. What is it? Can I get rid of it?

This is powdery mildew. Powdery mildew is not a fatal condition; it's more of a nuisance. If you would like to try to improve the condition, follow these recommended cultural practices (excerpted from http://aces.nmsu.edu/ces/plantclinic/documents/powdery-mildew-od-4_final.pdf). However, do not expect to eradicate the disease. Something not mentioned in the following list is to avoid sprinkler irrigating shrubs. Instead, water them at the ground level. This will help reduce canopy humidity. Also, irrigating in the morning as opposed to the evening may help.

- Prune out infected plant parts if possible.

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- Remove fallen leaves (reduce overwintering inoculum).
- Destroy all infected plant material.
- Increase air flow around plants and prune or thin plants in overcrowded areas thereby reducing humidity in the plant canopy.
- Selectively prune other trees and shrubs to reduce shade.
- Maintain appropriate fertilizer levels.
- Avoid excessive nitrogen applications.
- Provide adequate water.
- Where mildew has been a persistent problem, replant using tolerant cultivars.
- Contact and systemic fungicides are available for most plants. However, proper timing of applications and thorough coverage of all above ground plant parts is critical for control.

39. (June) What can be used on top of the soil in a raised bed?

Applying mulch to the soil in a raised bed garden (or a non-raised bed for that matter) is a great idea. Mulch insulates the soil and helps reduce water evaporation from the soil. Many different materials can be used as mulch. Please see the following publication for a detailed discussion on mulch:

http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_h/h-121.pdf. I prefer to use organic mulches such as compost, wood chips, pecan shells, leaves, shredded bark, etc. Organic mulches (as opposed to mineral or synthetic such as rock or rubber respectively) decompose over time and add nutrients and organic matter to the soil.

40. (June) The top third of my desert willow has dead twigs. The rest is healthy. We're in the process of xeriscaping our yard.

The dead branches have many potential causes. More information is needed to answer this question. It could be water and/or heat stress. Is the tree adequately watered (deep soakings at the dripline of the tree)? Is the tree over-watered, especially at the root crown (the base of the trunk)? Both prolonged inadequate watering or overwatering at the root crown can cause dieback of branches. The recent change to the landscaping is a potential cause. However, branches do not die over night. If the landscape was very recently altered, this is probably not the cause. If recent landscape work has severed roots, the only thing to be done is water the tree well at the point in which the roots were severed and hope it rebounds. If the tree is not being adequately watered, water it. Finally, there may be some circling and girdling roots that are causing the branch dieback. Try giving the tree a firm shove and if it moved easily, then the root system is not well established and the homeowner should not expect a long life out of the tree.

41. (June) Something is eating my petunia and geranium blooms. What can I do?

This sounds like the tobacco budworm, which feeds on the buds and petals of both geranium and petunia.

Monitor for budworm to detect an infestation early. Check buds and flowers for small holes. If the caterpillar (small greenish-yellow caterpillar) is found, the most practical control is hand picking. Tobacco budworm larvae are most active during dusk so scout for the caterpillars and pick them off at this time. During daylight, they tend to hide around the base of the plant.

The tobacco budworm is a difficult insect to control with insecticides. Synthetic pyrethrins (but not the natural pyrethrins) can provide good control. Spinosad should also be effective. Bt can be used but will have limited effectiveness on geraniums where the caterpillar drills into flower buds and will not readily ingest the Bt. Bt will likely be more effective on petunia.

If potted geraniums are kept between seasons, remove the soil to eliminate pupae and repot the plants before overwintering.

42. (June) The Piñon pines in my neighbor's yard have mistletoe. Mine are fine. How can I keep it from spreading to mine?

Piñon trees are commonly infested with dwarf mistletoe. This type of mistletoe spreads its seeds via explosive berries. If your neighbor's trees are more than 15 ft away from your tree, it is unlikely that the seeds will actually be spread to your tree. If the trees are closer than that, simply focus on keeping your piñon healthy and vigorous by providing it with adequate water. Monitor the branches periodically for the mistletoe. If you notice a new mistletoe plant and it is at least 6 inches away from the main trunk of the tree, prune it out. If it is too close to the trunk, just break off the plant before it produces seed to reduce the chances of it spreading further in your tree. If the infestation moves to your trees, just remember, trees infested with mistletoe can have long and healthy lives. There is no chemical treatment to rid the tree of mistletoe.

43. (June) What do I need to do to keep squash bugs off my summer squash and cucumber plants?

According to Dr. Sutherland (NMSU Entomologist), squash bugs are very difficult to control. Manual removal is the most effective manner for homeowners to manage this common garden pest. Most insecticides available to homeowners (organic or otherwise) have limited effectiveness when used to treat the insect in the adult stage. They are most effective within a few days after the eggs hatch. She suggests that you take a hint from their name and "squash" the squash bugs. Be sure to inspect the underside of the leaves for bugs and clusters of reddish-brown eggs. She suggests that you hand pick (or scrape) the bugs and their eggs from the plant into a bucket of soapy water. In some cases, a severely infested leaf may be completely removed and many of the pests killed in the process.

44. (July) I had a tree cut down. How can I keep sprouts from coming up around the stump, preferably without chemicals?

Certain tree species (i.e. Siberian elm, tree of heaven) sprout profusely from cut stumps. If you could turn back time just a little bit, the most effective remedy to prevent resprouting is to paint Glyphosate (Ex: RoundUp) on the freshly cut stump (within minutes of cutting it) in the late spring or early fall (fall application is generally recommended). When applying Glyphosate in this manner, there is little chance of accidental exposure on neighboring plants and the area in which chemical is applied is very small. I am definitely a proponent of using chemicals only when necessary. This is a situation where chemicals may really help you out.

I suppose in this situation, you could create a freshly cut stump if the stump is tall enough, then apply the Glyphosate to the newly cut stump. If this is not possible, just repeatedly cut off the resprouts before they are about 8 inches. This will eventually deplete the stored food in the stump and roots. You could even try painting some Glyphosate on the freshly cut sprouts to hasten the process.

45. (July) I am growing potatoes from seed potatoes. How do I know when the potatoes are ready to dig? Do they need fertilizer? What kind?

The following information was excerpted from

http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/circ457.pdf starting on pg 12.

Plant potatoes by cutting tubers into sections averaging 1 ½ to 2 inches, each containing at least one good eye or bud. When cutting tubers for planting, let the sections dry out in the shade for a day or two so that the cut surfaces of the sections or "seed pieces" develop cork or scar tissue. This reduces the chances of tuber rot after planting.

Plant potatoes in a trench 6 to 8 inches deep, spacing the seed pieces 12 inches apart. The soil beneath the trench should be well-conditioned with compost. Cover seed pieces with 1 to 2 inches of soil and compost, then irrigate. As foliage develops and plants reach 5 to 6 inches tall, backfill the trench with a mixture of soil and compost throughout the first part of the summer, hilling up the soil around the developing foliage. Keep at least three quarters of the foliage above the soil line. Mulching the bed with straw keeps tubers cool. Tubers form on many stems rising above the seed piece and they must be kept cool. Seed pieces placed too close to the soil surface during hot weather form too much foliage and no tubers. Over-stimulation with nitrogen fertilizer can cause the same problem.

Potatoes can be harvested as new potatoes when the tubers reach a desired size. Skin on new potatoes slips easily from the tubers. Immediately use new potatoes because they have a short storage life.

As potato plants mature, growth slows and tops turn yellow and begin to fall over. Skin on the tubers becomes thicker, tougher, and more firmly attached. Dig potatoes carefully with a spading fork or shovel.

46. (July) The junipers along the median strip have dead brown patches scattered through them. What is the matter? How do I fix it?

Dead patches in junipers could be due to overzealous pruning, lack of adequate water, a foliar fungal infection from Phomopsis (which will only infect a stressed plant), or perhaps some bad drivers?? Unfortunately, unless you have some control over how the junipers are managed in the median, your hands are tied. If you do have some control, please check that the plants are receiving some irrigation every now and then. Check that they are not surrounded by rock with black plastic underneath. If so, and you have the power to change these deficiencies, please do!

47. (July) My mulberry tree has brown to black wet spots running down the trunks from where some branches were cut off. Some of it was there last year, but more of it now. Is this a problem?

This condition is not dangerous for your tree and, in fact, it is very common. Your mulberry tree has slime flux or bacterial wetwood. This is a bacterial infection that raises the gas pressure of the tree and causes bacteria to ooze out. The ooze may be slimy or frothy and may be smelly. The bacteria enter a tree through a wound. Pruning cuts are a common entry point. Once the bacteria infect the main trunk, there is nothing that can be done. If the infection is only on a lateral branch, the branch may be pruned out. There is no cure for the disease. Just keep the tree watered and well cared for and you should enjoy many more years of mulberry shade in your yard. Please see the following publication for more information on slime flux: http://aces.nmsu.edu/ces/plantclinic/documents/slime-flux-od-2_final.pdf

48. (July) There are perfectly round cuts in my rose leaves at the edges. It looks as if someone took a cookie cutter to them. What is the problem?

The cookie-cutter shaped holes on your rose leaves are due to leafcutter bees. Leafcutter bees are important native insects. They use leaf fragments to construct their nest cells. The leaf damage they cause is negligible. They are efficient pollinators. Consider yourself lucky to have these bees visiting your yard!

49. (July) I'm looking for a low-water and "tough" lawn. There won't be much traffic on it. What should I plant?

If the site is sunny, does not receive much traffic, and a rather uneven "prairie" look is acceptable, I would recommend a blue grama or buffalograss. These are warm-season grasses and the best time to seed them is between May 15th and August 1st. Please read the following publication for a detailed explanation of grasses suited to NM (<http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/h/h-508.pdf>).

50. (July) “Bugs” are eating my chard. What should I do?

These sound like flea beetles. They are small, shiny beetles that produce characteristic “shot hole” damage to leaves. These pests overwinter as adults in debris. Cleaning up extra debris at the end of the season may help reduce flea beetle numbers the following season. Management and prevention options include placing row covers over your crops, employing good sanitation, and as a last resort, spinosad, permethrin, or pyrethrin insecticides. You may find this Colorado State publication on flea beetles useful, <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05592.html>.

51. (July) My tomatoes are taking a long time to ripen. What am I doing wrong?

The optimum temperature range for ripening mature green tomatoes is 68 to 77 degrees F. If temperatures become too hot, ripening will slow down. When temperatures remain too hot for a long period of time, ripening will cease. Wait for the weather to cool down and the tomatoes should continue to ripen as expected.

52. (July) My Yucca has a rotted main stem, and wet-looking inside. The leaves pull off easily. What to do?

This is probably the yucca weevil. This insect bores into the yucca trunk and invites bacterial infection. The leaves begin to turn yellow and die, and a putrid smell emanates from the infected trunk. Eventually, the plant falls over and dies. The recommended treatment is to remove any yuccas that are infected. Do not leave them near any remaining uninfected yucca or agave plants. Treat the soil with insecticide labeled for control of grubs (beetle larvae). Do not replant the area with new yucca plants for 2 years to be certain that the larvae, pupae, and adults are not remaining in the soil. Before removing your yucca plants, confirm that yucca weevil is the problem by contacting the Extension Office.

53. (July) I have caterpillars growing on my tomatoes and they are eating the foliage. How can I get rid of them?

You have the dreaded (and common) tomato hornworm. The adult form of this caterpillar is the very large hawk moth. The best way to control tomato hornworms is to scout for them often and hand pick them off of your plant. Plunk them in a bucket of soapy water to finish the job. Because the caterpillars blend in so well, look for small raspberry-like poop sitting on top of leaves to clue you into the fact that the caterpillars are present!

54. (July) My tomato plants have big yellow spots on the leaves. I water every other day. Should I fertilize them?

The big yellow spots on your tomato are probably not due to a lack of soil fertility. My first thought is that your plants are probably infected with one of the wilt diseases (Verticillium or Fusarium). These are soil-borne fungal pathogens that are favored by wet soils. You should bring in a sample to the County Extension Agent for plant pathology analysis. Once the disease is confirmed, destroy any remaining plants that are infected. Do not plant tomatoes in the same location if your garden for about 4 years or try solarizing the infected location with a clear plastic for one season. In the future, be sure to supply adequate water to tomatoes, but do not over-water them. Before you irrigate, dig into the soil with your fingers to feel the soil moisture. If the soil feels moist just 1 or 2 inches below the soil surface and your plants are not wilted, try waiting at least another day or two before irrigating again.

55. (July) I have this weed. I think it is lamb's quarter. Can I eat it? How to fix it?

If your weed is indeed lamb's quarter, it may be eaten. Please verify the identification of the plant before consuming it. Bring one of the plants to the Extension Office for proper identification. Once you verify the identification, lamb's quarter leaves may be used like spinach. The tender young leaves are the best. Steam the leaves, add them to a salad, or put them in a soup or a quiche. Do not use the plant for edible purposes if it was grown in a heavily fertilized field (it may contain harmful levels of nitrates) or in a field in which herbicides were sprayed. Also, according to a University of Vermont publication, people with arthritis, gastric inflammations, hepatic conditions, gout, rheumatism, or prone to kidney stones should use caution with lamb's quarter and other similar plants containing oxalates.

56. (July) I have brown spots in my lawn. Could it be due to grubs? How to kill them?

Brown spots in a lawn *could* be due to grubs. Grubs are the larvae of June beetles. They look like large C-shapes "worms" with brown heads and six legs. Grubs eat the roots of grass, causing the grass to die. With the roots removed, the grass can often be lifted from the soil like a rug. The presence of the grubs at the edge of the brown spots, where the living and dead grass meets, is a clue that grubs are responsible for the brown spots.

After determining that grubs are responsible for the brown spots, treatment is warranted. Timing is important. The June beetles mate and lay eggs between May and July. The grubs hatch and feed voraciously on grass roots. This is when the most damage to your grass occurs and the best time to treat. Use a grub control with the active ingredient Imidacloprid in July. The grass absorbs the Imidacloprid and becomes a poisonous treat for the feeding grubs. Spring treatment of grubs is

not recommended because the grubs are about to mature into adults. At this time they are not feeding much, therefore not causing much damage. More importantly, they won't ingest much of the poisoned grass roots making treatment ineffective.

57. (July) My tomatoes are splitting their skins, “like they’re getting too big for their skins.” What is the matter?

The tomatoes are getting too big for their skins! Splitting is caused by fluctuations in soil moisture. If tomato plants with maturing fruits are suddenly heavily watered (perhaps by monsoonal rains), the plants absorb water, the fruits expand internally, the tomato skin cannot expand very much, so it splits. Try to keep tomatoes evenly watered to prevent splitting. Some varieties are more resistant to splitting, but they may have tougher skins.

58. (Aug.) How to harvest Spaghetti squash?

The rind should be firm and glossy and resist denting with a fingernail. The fruit turns color from a creamy white to a golden yellow. Harvest before a heavy frost.

59. (Aug) What can I plant in my vegetable garden now?

Now is the perfect time to start cool season vegetables. Some examples are: carrots, lettuce (leaf and head), onions, turnips, spinach, and kohlrabi. NMSU has a couple of useful publications to help you decide when to plant what. See the following links.

http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/circ457.pdf
http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_circulars/circ457B.pdf

60. (Aug.) Elm and cottonwood trees have new sprouts coming up from roots. How can I kill them?

Unfortunately, if you desire to keep the tree, there is no way to permanently kill the root sprouts. If you were to apply an herbicide to the sprouts, you run the risk of damaging the tree. If the sprouts are coming up in a lawn, just mow them and don't worry about them. If the sprouts are coming up in an area other than your lawn, simply cut the sprouts off. Continue to do this as needed.

61. (Aug.) I was given a dish garden of cactus as a gift a couple of months ago, but now the plants are looking awful. They have white stuff on the “branches” and joints. I tried to wipe it off, but it turned red when I did. What is it?

This sounds like cochineal scale. They are sap-sucking insects with a fluffy waxy outer coating. Insecticidal soap or neem oil may provide some control. But, these products will not penetrate the waxy coating easily. A pretreatment with a strong

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stream of water or dabbing the scale with alcohol will damage the waxy coating. Follow up with neem or insecticidal soap.

62. (Aug.) My 30 year-old tree in the front yard next to my neighbor has been losing its leaves. The part on our side of the wall is green. It gets watered every time we water our lawn, which is on the other side of the tree. But my neighbor took his lawn and weeds out by the wall and has gravel in it now. Why is part of it dying? It was fine last year.

Tree roots grow shallow and they are far-reaching. They grow only where the soil is moist and loose. Roots do not know property boundaries. If your neighbor has had a nice, well-watered lawn through the years, it is very likely that some of your tree roots have been inhabiting this space for many years. Your neighbor has been helping to water your tree. When he removed his lawn and stopped watering those roots, the tree suffered. Perhaps you can talk with your neighbor and gain permission to water your tree roots once a month or so?

63. (Sept.) Is it too late to plant Hachita Grass seed?

Hachita grass is a warm-season grass (blue grama grass). It is best to seed or plant plugs between May 15th and August 1st.

64. (Sept.) When is the first expected frost date in Albuquerque? East Mts?

The official average first frost in Albuquerque occurs on Halloween, Oct. 31st. However, this is measured at the Sunport. This is not necessarily average for all parts of Albuquerque, especially the East Mts. You might expect the first frost the second week of October in the east Mountains. Keep in mind that this can vary wildly from one year to the next. Averages are only useful to a point, just watch the weather and be prepared!

65. (Sept.) I used a spray (Glyphosate) about two weeks ago to kill milkweed, but it has not worked. What should I try next?

Resources indicate that milkweed is best controlled with glyphosate in the fall when the plant is in the late bud or flower stage. You may have tried to kill the weed a bit early. However, another important factor affecting how well glyphosate will work is the health of the plant. A well-watered healthy plant will translocate the herbicide more effectively than a water stressed plant. So, love your weeds before you try to kill them with glyphosate! So, try again a little later, but be sure the weeds are not water stressed.

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Horticulture Agent**

66. (Sept.) For my daughter’s wedding, what plants can I plant that will be blooming in October?

Some plants that tend to bloom in October are roses, aster, chrysanthemum, goldenrod, statice, zinnias, dahlias, maximilian daisy, agastache, nepeta, chocolate flower, rudbeckia, gaillardia, salvia, and yarrow.

67. (Sept.) I had a weed growing near (3 ft.) my vegetable garden, and just found out that it is Jimson weed, and it is poisonous. Is it safe to eat the vegetables?

Jimson weed is very poisonous if you ingest the plant. Take care not to accidentally harvest any part of the Jimson weed. I find no research based references indicating that the plants in a garden will uptake poisonous alkaloids from a poisonous plant growing nearby, thus becoming poisonous themselves. Take care not to ingest any of the Jimson weed and the vegetables should be perfectly safe to eat.

68. (Sept.) Can I plant grass seed now? What kind?

September is an appropriate time to seed cool-season grasses in Albuquerque. Refer to the following table (excerpted from http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_h/h-509.pdf) for the correct timing for seeding different grass species.

Grass	Seeding time
<i>Warm-season</i>	
Bermudagrass	May 15 - Aug 1
Blue grama	May 15 - Aug 1
Buffalograss	May 15 - Aug 1
Zoysiagrass	May 15 - Aug 1
<i>Cool-season</i>	
Fine fescue	Aug 15 - Sept 15
Kentucky bluegrass	Aug 15 - Sept 15
Perennial ryegrass	Aug 15 - Sept 15
Tall fescue	Aug 15 - Sept 15

69. (Sept.) I have a Scotch pine that is turning brown. I thought it was just turning early, but none of the others are. What’s the matter?

Even evergreen trees do lose their leaves in the fall. Older needles of pine trees will turn brown and fall off easily. The newer needled (at the tips of branches) will not turn brown and fall off. If the newer needles are turning brown, then the tree may be

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experiencing an abiotic (non-disease) stress such as lack of water, too much water, planted too deeply, or circling/girdling roots. If the older needles are falling off, there may be nothing to worry about. If it seems that more needles are falling off than usual and it's happening earlier than usual, this could be (again) an abiotic stress. Take a closer look at the base of the tree to identify the possibilities. Is the tree being adequately watered (deep soaks infrequently at the dripline)? Is it planted too deeply? Can you shove the tree and wiggle it easily? If you dig around the base of the tree with a trowel, do you find roots that are circling around the tree instead of radiating outward? If you find any of these clues, this could be the underlying cause for the browning needles.

70. (Oct) How often should I fertilize my rose bushes?

Roses need the “big three” Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium (NPK), as well as micronutrients, such as Iron, and Zinc. The following information was excerpted from <http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/h/H-165.pdf>:

Nitrogen: Apply every four to six weeks, beginning just before bud break in early spring. Continue to apply nitrogen at four-week intervals until three weeks before the average date of the first fall frost. Ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) or its equivalent applied at the rate of 2 tablespoons full per plant should be sufficient for most soils. These rates may be a bit high for fertile clay soils, and somewhat low for sandy soils. Increase or decrease application rates according to amount of terminal growth the plant is making.

Phosphorus: Apply one-fifth to one-fourth cupful of 10-10-0, 10-20-0, or 16-20-0 fertilizer or equivalent evenly into the soil underneath the canopy of a newly pruned rosebush in early spring. Apply an equal amount when new growth reaches 4 to 6 inches and again when the first blossoms have faded. Additional phosphorus should not be needed for the rest of the season.

Potassium: Potash is seldom needed in New Mexico. Soil tests have shown that most soils contain adequate amounts. Occasionally, very light sands are low in potash. Even when needed, an application of 1 tablespoonful of muriate of potash, or its equivalent, per plant would be sufficient for two years or longer.

71. (Oct) How can I get rid of Bermuda grass, preferably without chemicals?

Bermudagrass is not an easy weed to control, especially when it must be controlled selectively within an established turf of another species or if it is growing in your vegetable garden or landscaped area. It can be managed nonchemically with a persistent program of removal. If the area is large, cultivate then withhold water during the summer to desiccate the unearthed stolons and rhizomes. Mulches of black plastic or geotextile landscape fabric can also be effective over large areas if light is excluded. This treatment effectively smothers the weed (along with anything else growing in the area). Bermudagrass may also be controlled with herbicides.

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Glyphosate is good for spot treatments. It is important to apply Glyphosate when the grass is actively growing and well watered. Repeat applications may be necessary. Another product on the market that claims to selectively kill bermudagrass and not your cool season lawn is “Bermudagrass Control for Lawns by Bayer Advanced”. This could be worth a try. Please read and follow all label instructions when applying herbicides.

72. (Oct.) How do I make and use compost tea?

I can’t answer this question without first pointing out that the jury is still out on the safety of compost tea. If tea is brewed in certain ways (adding sugar or molasses) or if unsanitary methods are used *E. coli* or *Salmonella* may breed in the compost tea. Also, the benefits of compost tea are not clearly supported by research. In other words, the research shows conflicting results.

The following paragraph is excerpted from a University of Connecticut publication: <http://www.soiltest.uconn.edu/factsheets/CompostTea.pdf>

“There are actively aerated compost (AACT) tea kits that can be purchased ranging in size from about 5 gallons to large commercial brewers. Home gardeners can put together a quick set up using a 5 gallon bucket, an aquarium pump with a bubbler, and some plastic tubing. One recipe calls for a pound (about 4 cups) of good quality compost for a five gallon bucket of water. Unchlorinated water is essential as chlorine kills microorganisms and the purpose of making an AACT is to grow them. The compost can either be added to the water and the resulting product strained before putting it in a sprayer or the compost can be contained in fine woven cheesecloth or even pantyhose. Stir and rearrange the bubblers a couple of times each day over the 2 or 3 day brewing period.”

73. (Oct.) Can Chinaberry trees grow here? Are they “legal” trees?

Chinaberry can grow in Albuquerque and do quite well. They are cold hardy to zone 7, so in an unusually cold winter, they will suffer. They are legal trees. Certain trees are restricted in Albuquerque for air quality reasons. In other words, the restricted trees produce much pollen that causes allergies. For an up-to-date list of restricted trees, visit the City website <http://www.cabq.gov/airquality/treeflyer.html>