

QA1037

Three years ago, we purchased Fire Power nandinas to add color in the fall and winter to our landscape. That first year, they were beautiful turning red in the fall and staying red till late spring. After that first year, they do not turn red. They stay green year round. Someone said because it has to get cold for them to turn red. We had more cold weather this past winter than we did when we put them out. I see them around town in other peoples' yards and theirs are red in the winter. What is wrong with ours? Do I need to use some type of fertilizer on them. They are really healthy except they just stay green. - D. G.

D. G. perhaps your neighbors are speaking kindly to their plantings.

The nandina variety 'Fire Power' is tops on my list of dwarf nandinas. I'm currently growing four varieties in our home landscape.

Nandina domestica, N. domestica 'Compacta', N. domestica 'Bar Harbor' and N. domestica 'Fire Power' are all grown in various locations in our rural landscape. Our landscape is Water wise, Earth Kind and minimum maintenance. All these nandinas work well in this type of application.

All nandinas I'm aware of will add winter color to the landscape. Some from bright red clusters of berries and foliage while other varieties provide colorful foliage only.

The best color on nandina foliage is usually obtained from locations receiving a minimum of six hours of sun and eight is actually better. The most colorful nandinas I recall seeing were in full sun throughout the day. As sunlight is reduced fall/winter color is usually reduced also.

Cold temperatures can also enhance fall/winter colors. 'Fire Power' will provide great fall color if the planting receives sufficient sunlight and even better color during colder fall, winter and early spring with cold - prolonged cool conditions.

If your planting is not receiving the needed sunlight relocate during Dec. - Jan.

I am in the process of redoing my flower beds and am confused as to the type of compost to use. Ever nurseryman I talk to says to use what they sell because it is better than the competitors. They recommend compost from cotton burr to manure to a landscape mix and everything in between. Is there one superior to another?

Any information would be greatly appreciated. Thanks. -L. T.

The best compost is the one you use. None of them are aiding your soil and therefore you if they are not used.

In the Earth Kind™ Landscape Management System we recommend plant derived finished compost. This means compost from plant parts only that has completed the composting process. If you pick out a piece of woody material and it does not bend with pressure between two fingers with slight pressure the compost is not ... finished. If this particle "snaps" it is not finished.

Most if not all Texas soils will benefit from compost so do use it. Six inches of finished compost blended with non amended native soil will provide a positive growing mix for most gardening activities. In heavy clay soils the recommendation is blend 3" of expanded shale with 3" of finished compost, crown the beds, install the desired plantings and mulch 3-4" deep with a shredded mulch.

Crowning the beds 6" in the center aids drainage. The use of expanded shale is not recommended in sandy soils.

We read your column in the newspaper and would like your suggestions on how to prevent armadillo's from digging in our yard. Most of the yard has St. Augustine with one side having a mix of Bermuda and St. Augustine.

The only solutions we've been given was to shoot, trap or spread moth balls around the yard but we do not want to risk harming our cats and dog with moth balls, nor do we want to risk snaring one of our pets in a trap.

Your recommendation would be appreciated. - E. F.

The recommended traps used to capture these armored critters should do no harm to pets and they do not harm armadillos.

Texas Wildlife Damage Management Service is at <http://agextension.tamu.edu/twdms/twdmshom.htm> or under Google enter Texas Wildlife Damage Management Service and click on their listing. You may wish to contact their office directly for suggestions and literature regarding armadillo control. These folks are true experts in this field.

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