

# Gardeners Information Service



## BLACK SPOT SPRAY

Is there a non-toxic spray you can make at home to treat black spot on roses?

—I.H., TAKOMA, WASHINGTON

Black spot is caused by the fungus *Deplocarpon rosae*. It usually appears in cool, moist weather as small, black spots on the upper surfaces of the leaves, which swiftly turn yellow and drop. If left untreated, black spot can completely defoliate a rose bush. Here is one recipe for a non-toxic homemade fungicidal spray:

- To 1 gallon of water, add:
- 3 tablespoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon of horticultural oil
- 1 teaspoon of liquid dishwashing soap

Vigorously mix the ingredients before pouring the solution into a spray bottle. Before applying, remove and dispose of infected leaves, including those that have dropped to the ground. Spray the remaining foliage thoroughly, especially the undersides. Re-apply the spray once a week as needed during the summer months.

## WINTER CARE FOR CREEPING GLOXINIA

How do I overwinter the annual *Asarina erubescens* in Zone 7 Atlanta, Georgia,?


—A.M., ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Creeping gloxinia (*Asarina erubescens*) is a tender, woody vine from Mexico with gray-green foliage and bright pink trumpet-shaped flowers that have a yellow throat. Planted in full sun and well-drained soil, it blooms from June to September on a vine that can reach 10 feet tall. In your area, it is best treated as an annual, but it is possible to keep it indoors during the winter.

To do this, transplant it in early fall to a container of free-draining soilless mix and bring it inside to a south-facing window. Allow the soil to dry out between water-

## AHS Gardening Community Listserv

AHS's Gardening Community Listserv allows you to connect 24-7 with gardeners around the country. Share your successes and get advice and solutions for your garden problems with real-dirt gardeners who have been there. It's easy to join. Go to the AHS Web site ([www.ahs.org](http://www.ahs.org)), click on the "Community" subhead on the left, then click on "Listserv" on the Community page. Scroll two-thirds of the way down that page to find a link to send e-mail to the listserv address ([AHS\\_GARDENING-SUBSCRIBE-REQUEST@home.ease.lsoft.com](mailto:AHS_GARDENING-SUBSCRIBE-REQUEST@home.ease.lsoft.com)) and follow the directions in the return e-mail. The ongoing discussions will come to you as e-mail. Here's a snippet from a recent exchange:



Help! I found that my little Serbian spruce—the one I've been nurturing for the past three years to its current 3 1/2-foot height—had its leader chewed into a 3-inch white toothpick by deer! Rats!! I recall reading that if an evergreen lost its leader, it is possible to "train" a nearby lateral as a new leader. Has any one ever done this?

—C.F., WEST CENTRAL, ILLINOIS

Yes, we bonsai fanatics routinely do this. You can use a plastic twist-tie or twine to secure the top branch to the splinter the deer left behind, or use a stake very close to the tree and tie the branch to that. In bonsai, we would wind wire around the branch to become a new leader and merely bend it up, but using the twine will work fine. You may want to use a knife to even off any ripped bark. Spray the tree or the area around it with deer repellent or a pepper spray to discourage a repeat performance.

—J.L., TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

ings. An alternative is to start new plants by taking cuttings any time after mid-June.

Twining snapdragon, (*Asarina procumbens*), a lax spreader with cream and yellow flowers from May through July, is a hardier relative that can survive a Zone 6 winter if planted in soil with excellent drainage and provided winter protection.

## ABOUT CALAMINT

I would like to grow calamint (*Calamintha coccinea*) in my USDA Zone 7 garden in Washington, D.C. Will it live?

—J.K., WASHINGTON, D.C.

*Calamintha coccinea*, says Bob McCartney of Woodlanders Nursery in Aiken, South

Carolina, "is a plant of the sand ridges of north central Georgia to southern Mississippi, down into Florida. It is xerophytic, occurring on deep, sterile sand in dry sites and full sun." *C. coccinea* grows about two-and-a-half to three feet tall and bears red tubular flowers.

While it grows naturally in USDA Zones 8 and 9, "it can survive in Zone 7," says McCartney. However, excellent drainage is critical. If you have clay soil, you would need to amend it with organic matter.

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**WE'RE READY TO HELP:** For answers to your gardening questions, call Gardeners Information Service at (800) 777-7931, extension 131, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Eastern time, or e-mail us anytime at [gis@ahs.org](mailto:gis@ahs.org).