

The questions and comments are coming in. Two readers have comments to add to the Cedar Tree Underplantings column.

Judy writes that her mother Isabel Bramel has success growing “lots of plants under her cedar tree.” The two plants she mentioned were St. Johnswort and lion’s bane. I could not find information on lion’s bane but I did find Leopard’s Bane (Doronicum). There are several choices listed in “Sunset Western Garden Book:” D. cordatum (D. caucasicum, D. columnae, D. orientale) and D. plantagineum (Plaintain Leopard’s Bane). Plaintain Leopard’s Bane goes dormant in summer. Doronicum likes partial and dappled shade so you might want to try it if you have cedars in your garden. I very much like the looks of a healthy spread of St. Johnswort (Hypericum) with its bright yellowy gold flowers but many of the Hypericum ground covers we have here in Kitsap often are struck by a fungus that causes die back and looks quite unsightly and/or sparse. You can cut your Hypericum ground covers back every two to three years and the new growth will look quite healthy. St. Johnswort ground covers are hard to get rid of if you later decide you don’t like the look. They seem to keep sprouting up again and again whether you want them or not.

Speaking of unwanted plants, Sue Plummer wrote she’s tried lamium and had horrible luck. It’s escaping all over her garden and into the woods surrounding her property. She’s tried Roundup and even had a spraying company use Crossbow on it and it still keeps popping up everywhere. Sue cautions others to avoid lamium. I tried researching how to eradicate lamium. Other than pulling, pulling and more pulling I could find no real solutions to Sue’s problem with this plant. I did, however, discover a good website from another Purdue, at [http://www.hort.purdue.edu/hort/ext/Pubs/HLA/HLA\\_001.pdf](http://www.hort.purdue.edu/hort/ext/Pubs/HLA/HLA_001.pdf). This site lists spreading ornamental plants, their virtues and vices. You’ll find two pages talking about how to select the right ground cover and how to avoid infestations of escaping plants. There are also two pages listing ground covers with behavior ratings on a scale of one to five. The site tells if a plant is perennial, biennial or annual and how it propagates. That way you’ll know how to go about controlling a plant if it does start conquering your garden. You can also look up the attributes or problems with tempting ground covers so you can choose wisely.

My sweet sister Jackie Aitchison asked me how to prevent and get rid of aphids on Brussel sprouts. Ciscoe Morris inspired me to grow Brussel sprouts (oh la la) and our family grew and ate them for two autumns in a row. I took Ciscoe’s advice to let them freeze first before harvesting. The Brussels were the best we’ve ever tasted but they ended up both years covered in aphids and it was extremely tedious to peel off the outer Brussel’s leaves to get rid of the pesky dead (luckily) black aphids. I finally decided it wasn’t worth it and didn’t plant any this year.

My fellow garden writer Chris Smith “Sound Gardener” (and retired Kitsap WSU Extension Agent) is my favorite vegetable cultivating guru and I asked him if he grows

Brussel sprouts. He said no for the same reason I quit growing them. Chris said during spring and summer he is out in his garden two or three times a day and keeps on top of aphids by just spraying them off with a stream of water from the hose. But by the time it gets cold he's not out so much and the aphids win the battle. I asked if floating row covers would work to deter aphids and Chris said he's tried them on broccoli and cabbage to deter aphids and other critters and the broccoli bolts when you use floating row cover. The covers work well with cabbage though. We both speculated it would be worth exploring. So far only one of Jackie's Brussel sprout plants is infested so she'll give the row cover a try and I'll report back in a future column.

Snohomish County Extension Agent, Holly Kennel, says use trap (or sacrificial crops) to deter aphids from your vegetables. Use nasturtiums around your squash (an aphid favorite). The aphids will cover the nasturtiums and you can pull them all up and dispose of them. Monitor your squash daily and spray both the upper and under sides of leaves with water to knock the aphids off before they get out of control.

Keep those questions and comments coming. Until next week, happy gardening.

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