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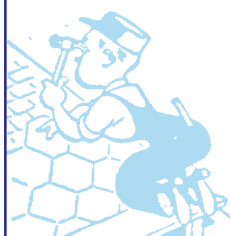
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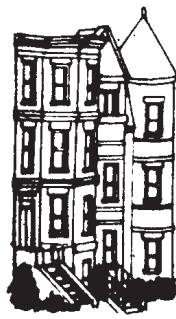
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The Capitol Hill
Garden Club
presents



Dear Garden
Problem Lady,

A tree in our backyard is battling for water, since our backyard patio is bricked. I was thinking of putting down gravel on the dirt access path between our house and next door to stop water – and dirt – from racing out to the street and into the storm drains there. Is this a good idea? If yes, what kind of gravel should we get?

Your question is timely. The Nov. 10 meeting of the Capitol Hill Garden Club will focus on exactly this, with representatives from the DC Department of the Environment (details below). I take it that rainwater runs off your brick patio because the bricks are cemented. Your tree probably will not benefit from gravelling the access path unless the path can slope towards the tree. But gravel on the path will still help stop water and soil from running off to the street. There are thousands of sizes, types and colors of gravel. Manmade crushed rock is sturdy and stable. River rock is smoother. Consult a quarry or landscape supply yard for expert advice.

When is a good time to plant a peony?

October is a good time to plant a peony root – making sure that the "eyes" are no more and no less than 1 to 2 inches from the surface of the soil; otherwise the peony will not bloom. However, most stores do not sell peony roots. A potted peony plant from a store can best be planted in spring.

What are the hard, green, fruit-like balls that I see here and there on the street where I live? They are nearly as big as tennis balls and the same color of green.

Black walnuts. That light-green rind is very tough. Extraction of the large nut inside, which does look like a familiar Persian walnut and is edible, can best be done by crashing it against a hard surface such as a driveway. The nut is tasty in nut breads and other cooking. If storing black walnuts for culinary use, refrigerate them. They contain a lot of fat and can go rancid otherwise.

Are Azaleas the same as Rhododendrons?

Plant taxonomists class all azaleas and rhododendrons as Rhododendron. The name "azalea" is commonly used for native deciduous species and some evergreen Oriental types. In general, "Rhododendron" is used for those species that have large, evergreen, leathery leaves. However, there are no sharp divisions. It is always correct to call any of them rhododendrons.

Feeling beset by gardening problems? Send them to the Problem Lady c/o The Capitol Hill Garden Club at andrew@hillrag.com. Your problems might prove instructive to others, and help them feel superior to you. Complete anonymity is assured.

Capitol Hill Garden Club programs are free. On Nov. 10, the club will focus on environmentally smart management of storm water and DC's RiverSmart Home subsidy program. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. at the Church of the Brethren, Fourth Street door, corner of North Carolina Avenue and Fourth Street SE. Membership details at 202-543-7539. ★



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