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The Capitol Hill
 Garden Club
 presents



Dear Garden
 Problem Lady,

In 1995, I planted a false cypress in my back yard that was supposed to be a small shrub. The label says "dwarf gold thread cypress chamaecyparis pisifera filifera 'Aurea Nana' low growing dense mound with drooping stringy branches, good accent plant, 30-36 inches". It is now a 10 feet tall tree. I don't know how to prune it. Anyhow, one is never supposed to cut the top off any tree. I don't have room for anything taller than 10 feet. What can I do?

First the good news: Ten feet may well be its maximum height. The bad news: even this so-called "dwarf" variety could reach 20 feet. Then it is labeled a "semi dwarf"! Your "nana" should not be taller than four feet. But pruning is tricky. You must cut only new growth, one small branchlet at a time. Old growth does not refurbish itself, so you must not create gaps or holes. This species grows very slowly, but if the worst happens and your tree grows taller -- you should remove yours and get a true dwarf.

I am thinking of getting a Camellia bush. I had one years ago and the squirrels ate all the blossoms; yet there is a very large one in my neighbor's yard and they never eat her buds. Are there some varieties that squirrels don't like?

Probably not. Some people experience no problems with squirrels. Others say their Sasanqua (early, winter blooming) camellias do not get eaten, but that their spring, Japonica camellias do. That might be because squirrels aren't as hungry in November-December as they are in February-March. Some maintain that feeding squirrels

and keeping fresh water out for them will deflect them from the camellias. Others say that's a myth. At the very least, if you plant the spring blooming type of camellia (Japonica), you should put fine, black, so-called bird netting over them by mid October, so that as the weather cools and the squirrels get hungrier, the buds are safe.

I am going to purchase some hellebores. Will I have to squirrel proof them?

No. Hellebores are expensive, but they require little care. They love shade, and they spread. They delight the eye in January, the first harbinger of spring. Try the white ones – helleborus niger. The pink and dark red ones are also lovely. Their leaves last all through the summer. Note: every part of this hardy perennial is toxic.

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 Tuesday, October 13, floral designer Marianne Raub of Helen Olivia in Alexandria, VA, will demonstrate the creation of elegant flower arrangements. 7 p.m. at the Church of the Brethren, 4th Street door, corner North Carolina Ave. and 4th Street, SE. Membership details at 202-543-7539. ★



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