COASTAL GARDENER COLUMN

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Author's Note: Two weeks ago I talked about nematodes in the landscape. In that article I forgot to mention a nematode suppression method that has been shown to be useful.

In the area of your garden where nematodes are a problem, plant marigolds. There are several species and many cultivars of marigold. Cultivars of African marigolds, *Tagetes erecta,* and French marigolds, *Tagetes patula,* have been found to have the best nematode suppressive properties.

To use marigolds effectively, they should be planted in a dense planting, i.e., a plant every two to three inches. Allow the marigolds to grow for the season. Then in the fall, when plants are mature but still green, incorporate the tops into the top six to eight inches of the garden. This can be done with a rototiller or spade. The important thing is to put the entire plant into the soil. As the marigold plants decay, they release substances which are nematicidal.

The cultivars "Single Gold" and "Nema-gone" have been found to provide good nematode suppression.

Q: I have a dwarf lemon tree growing in a pot. It was purchased as a Meyer or Eureka cultivar. The tree is five years old. The last two years the tree has produced giant, grapefruit-shaped lemons with one-inch thick rinds. Is there an explanation for this change in fruit size and shape?

A: All citrus cultivars are grafted onto a rootstock. The rootstock is a citrus species selected for vigor, disease resistance, and/or dwarfing characteristics. If the scion (your Meyer/Eureka lemon) is weak, damaged, diseased or dies, the

rootstock will often sprout and produce a "citrus tree," which produces a sour or sweet orange, a rough lemon, a grapefruit, or a mandarin. All the above are used as rootstocks for citrus propagation. I suspect your dwarf lemon had either a rough lemon or grapefruit rootstock and that rootstock has taken over and is now your citrus tree. You did not indicate that there was a noticeable change in the foliage or appearance of the tree, just that the fruit changed. This also suggests that a grapefruit or rough lemon was the rootstock.

There is no cure for this problem. The tree in the pot will have to be replaced by a new tree from the nursery, which has the desired fruit cultivar present. In future, pay attention to the graft union at the base of the tree trunk. If a shoot sprouts from the area below the graft union, cut it off before it becomes a major branch or takes over the tree completely.

My search of citrus information indicates there is no insect or disease organism or fertilizer effect that would cause your tree to produce the unusual fruit you described.

Send your landscape and garden questions to: **The Coastal Gardener, 624-A West Foster Road, Santa Maria, CA 93455.**