

“Ask The Plant Groom™ by Dale Groom, The Plant Groom™

For: QA1034

We would like to plant a tree that provides shade but doesn't grow very tall. Do you recommend purple flowering plum trees? We live in Central Texas and assume we should wait until late fall to plant one. - TR

No matter where you live in Texas, fall is the best time of the year to plant shade trees. It is also prime time to plant all types of winter hardy landscape plant materials.

While purple leaf plums are colorful ornamental trees they would not make my list of ... shade trees. We currently have three in a cluster on the east side of our home and have enjoyed them for approximately 15 years. They are planted in a cluster or grouping of three outside son Aaron's bedroom because he liked the colorful foliage.

These trees are not considered long-lived and they are susceptible to insects and diseases just a fruiting plums are.

Not knowing the specific height you wish the following are some shade trees I suggest worthy of reviewing: Chinese Pistachio-Pistacia chinensis, Golden rain Tree-Koelreuteria paniculata, Lacebark Elm-Ulmus parvifolia, 'Oklahoma' Redbud, Cercis Canadensis 'Oklahoma', (If your soil is deep.) 'Little Gem' Southern Magnolia- Magnolia graniflora 'Little Gem' and Texas Ash-Fraxinus texensis.

Top on my list of these I've listed is Chinese pistachio. We are currently growing two and love 'em!

All of a sudden one morning I had a brown patch about 8 ft diameter in St. Augustine. Is it possible that the lawn service that mowed my lawn brought me grubs or slugs or whatever it is that caused it? It is the one really healthy place that I have for St. Augustine including enough light. - S. N.

Brown in St. Augustine lawns this time of year are often the result of chinch bugs "visiting". These unwelcome very small black pests suck fluids from the cell walls which cause the grass plants to break down and turn brown.

These critters are ¼" or less, shiny black with a white spot/dot. Look for them where the grass is in transition from green to brown. Separate the blades and look closely. If chinch bugs are identified treat with an appropriate control aid. Remember, read and follow label directions when using any garden aid.

We recently moved to central Texas and need to know what grows in Texas and when we should plant. I know that you have a book called Month by Month Gardening in Texas but does it cover all types of plants including flowering shrubs or does it just cover vegetable gardening? - C. W.

This book does cover all types of gardening in Texas.

I recently moved to a new home that is nicely landscaped. The previous owners planted monkey grass all along the sidewalk and mulched the beds but they allowed Bermuda grass to grow among the monkey grass and didn't try to control it. I've tried pulling the runners out by hand and adding more mulch but I am fighting a losing battle. Is there anything I can do short of digging up the monkey grass? - D. K.

There are products available to apply directly over the top of existing landscape plantings to control grasses one active ingredient is Fusilade. Visit local retailers and ask for these specific aids. If you decide to utilize these products read and follow label directions.

The best type of sprayer to use for the application of these products is known as compression or pump-up sprayers. If you do not currently own a compression sprayer let me suggest investing in a quality plastic selection. I have used one of these for 15 years.

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