

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

For: QA1039

I am having a problem with my red oaks. I have a row of six trees that average 3 inches in trunk diameter and are 7-8 feet tall. All have received the same care. Late last summer two of them began to show signs of distress. The leaves began turning brown at the outside edges and gradually became completely brown. They both came back in the spring, but only for a short time. One of them appears to be dead, but the other is still struggling. It puts on new green leaves, but they are short-lived. This week I noticed a third tree seems to be following this pattern.

What is the problem and what should I do? - E. T.

Initially, this sounds like a cultural problem to me.

Red oaks 7-8' tall and 3" in diameter are relatively young trees. Root systems of mature trees can be damaged from lack of moisture and young trees are even more likely to have survival problems.

Should roots become damaged or die for whatever reason and environmental stress follows it is often hard for some trees to recover. This year statewide several types of trees have had difficulty in surviving including mature selections.

What to do? Nothing is a certain remedy. However, you may be successful by monitoring soil moisture and irrigating to prevent soil dryness. Do not keep the soil "wet".

If your trees come out in the spring fertilize with (N) nitrogen according to label directions, reapply two additional time six weeks apart and mulch the root system 3-4" deep with your favorite bark mulch. And, keep your fingers crossed.

These suggestions are based on assuming your trees were originally planted at the correct depth. If, they were planted below the original soil line they are most likely slowly suffocating from lack of oxygen to the root system.

The top of your tree's root ball should be at or slightly above the soil line. If they are below the soil line remove soil to the root ball's original top.

Last suggestion. If your trees do not look well by the end of next year's growing season remove and install new trees during Oct. or Nov.

I have a chinch bug problem and have been looking for an answer to my question on the Internet. Then it hit me, ask Dale Groom. So here it is, is there a "home made" remedy for chinch bugs. These over the counter insecticides are quite expensive and don't go very far. If there is no "home" remedy, then what type of insecticide do you recommend? Thank you so much. - G. H.

I do not recommend any home remedy for chinch bug control.

Properly selected and applied according to label directions at correct times is usually the most efficient way to control chinch bugs. Do make sure you are selecting the best-recommended active ingredients for chinch bug control.

You may also shop farm and/or feed & seed stores for alternative brands of the same recommended active ingredients. Concentrated products most often offer the best price while (RTU) ready to use formulations are the most costly.

Visit the Entomology Dept. of TX A. & M. at <http://insects.tamu.edu> for all types of insect information.

I was given two ever-blooming gardenia plants from my church in memory of my sister passing away this year. It was and is our favorite plant. I have prepared the soil (very hard) per nursery's suggestion. Was going to plant now when I was told they may freeze and not much you can do about it.

So what can I do, I really need your help since I am not a gardener. Thanking you in advance for your help and suggestions. - B. Y.

Sorry to hear of your loss.

Most but not all gardenias given as a floral items are often not 100% winter hardy in north Texas. In Conroe, Victoria and other warmer zone locations they may adapt and grow well out of doors.

Options in your area are: (1.) plant out of doors and take a chance or (2.) attempt to grow as a pot plant. If you choose the pot plant route place your plant in the sunniest location indoors during the winter. Outside plant in a morning sun with afternoon shade spot or dappled sun/shade throughout the day.

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