

"Ask The Plant Groom(tm) by Dale Groom, The Plant Groom(tm)

For: QA1045

I'm really behind schedule in ordering tulip and daffodil bulbs this season.

Realizing that Dallas is in zone 8, on the cusp of zone 7, do you think when I receive these bulbs I will have to pre-cool them? If so, can I plant them in 8 weeks (mid January) and still get a good showing in April and May? - S. S.

Yes, I agree you are a bit ... behind schedule. However there are some good possibilities.

Daffodils are members of the narcissus family and do not need chilling to bloom well in Texas. So, if you live in North, Central, East, West or South Texas this family may be successfully planted now for a show next spring.

Tulips perform best after receiving six weeks of prechilling, which is often done in the bottom of home, frigs. However, some retailer offer prechilled bulbs that are ready to plant. And this is the route I recommend you drive this season and then get back on track next year if you want a pretty tulip show next spring.

An option is to install a super planting of the various members in the narcissus family and don't be concerned about chilling any bulbs this season.

You may plant the tulips in mid Jan. and could be very successful but it's not an activity I'd conduct.

I hope you have had a good summer.

I have a couple landscaping questions I would like to ask you - your advise in the past has been very helpful. The first one is about hydrangeas. I have a couple that are getting big and would like to cut them back, but I know that if you do it at the wrong time, you can affect next year's blooms. The two varieties I have are Nikko

Blue and Endless Summer. Can you please suggest the best time to cut these back and what suggestions you have in doing this?

My other question is that I noticed my local coffee shop is offering free used coffee grounds for use in your gardening, as a compost I assume but don't know for sure... What do you think about using these?

Thanks in advance for your suggestions.

Sincerely - J. H.

Yes, summer was good. Thank you. I hope my suggestions continue to aid you and your gardening goals.

We have had good results in selective pruning hydrangeas after the first hard freeze stops all their growth activities with bypass hand pruners. This action allows viewing of each plant's individual shape when the leaves are gone.

Select buds pointed in the direction you want new growth to proceed and remove that specific branch at your desired height. Continue this throughout each individual plant until the shape and size you wish are achieved.

I do not recommend shearing these beauties into "hedges" or individual plants. I do encourage you to prune them in their natural growth patterns

We have also had acceptable results pruning at bud break.

Anyone's coffee grounds should be acceptable to add in composts. So, if you have a "source" I'd use them in the composting process. Remember, used coffee grounds are not a "compost" even if the brew tastes like compost at times.

I live several miles south of Troy, TX and have 2 small Shantung Maples in my yard. They were planted in the spring of 2004. The one in the front yard is surviving fairly well, has grown several feet; however the one in the back yard looks sick. It has also grown, but the leaves are light green & mottled with yellow. It now has brown spots with the leaves curling. Is this tree beyond help, or what can I do to save it. I did put about 4" of mulch around them in the early spring and have tried to keep them watered.

Thank you for any information. - A. Z.

The answer is, I don't know if your tree is beyond help or not. These puppies will do well in clay soils as long as they drain well. However, they do need some soil moisture. This is especially true during the growing season.

This time of year all types of tree leaves are doing "different" things.

My suggestion is to secure a slow release (N) nitrogen fertilizer and apply according to label directions at the end of March or earlier if new growth begins and May 1st, maintain a mulch 3-4" thick and soil moisture as needed to prevent dry soil.

Dale Groom, Extension Horticulturist-Dallas County, Texas Cooperative Extension, Native Texan, Author, Columnist, Radio/TV Host is also known state wide as The Plant Groom(tm). Send your lawn, garden and landscape questions to Dale at [dalegroom@mycvc.net](mailto:dalegroom@mycvc.net)

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