

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

For: QA1047

I have two questions from your recent article in our local paper.

1. What is antitranspirant and does it need to be removed when the tree is returned to the outdoors?
2. What would you recommend to use to eliminate pests prior to moving plants into the house?

Thanks, L. S.

Antitranspirants applied to cut Holiday trees, trees in containers, cut greenery, tropical plants seasonal color or any other plants never requires removal. This is true whether used indoors on house/tropical plants or outside on any landscape plant.

NOTE: If you did not catch the earlier mention information L. S. is referring to here's what we are discussing. Antitranspirants are considered non-toxic products that are available at retailers and used as aids to reduce the transpiration or loss of internal moisture through their leaves. Another way to state this is ... they help to keep cut plants “fresher” longer, which is desirable this time of year with our cut trees, wreaths and garland.

These products also aid in reducing moisture loss through leaves of landscape plants and are used to reduce wilting potential of newly transplanted shrubs and trees. Cloud Cover and Wilt Pruf are the two brands I'm familiar with and there may be others. Always read and follow label directions when using these products or any other gardening aids.

I sure hope your tropical houseplants are inside now.

Prior to bringing plants indoors examine and if pests are found treat with an approved aid according to label directions for ... houseplants. There are several brands at local retailers. Choose the brand and formulation you prefer.

I planted a Mexican Sage brush this past spring and it has developed very well. I was reading that I should cut it back, but it never said how far. Do I cut it back all the way to the ground, a few inches above, or a foot above?

Also, I have planted several Crape Myrtles over the past few years. The most recent ones have a lot of buds on them where the flowers would go. They never fully developed this past spring. Since they are only a year

or so old, should I strip the buds off next year so the tree won't try to make flowers or should I just leave it alone. My thinking is, if the tree isn't trying to make flowers it will develop a root system better. That is what I was told to do with my fruit trees for the first few years anyway.

Thanks for your help as always. - P. I.

Mexican Bush Sage is a super summer color plant isn't it? I is very hard to beat for ease of growth, bloom period plus heat and drought resistant.

You may cut back after your first hard killing freeze to about 1 ft. or wait until new growth begins in the spring. I usually wait until new growth begins in the spring then remove the dead parts.

New and mature crape myrtles do not require pruning. However, we may do some selective pruning.

These puppies bloom best on new growth and require full sun, adequate soil moisture and available (N) nitrogen to accomplish this. If you decide to prune use a pair of sharp by-pass hand pruners, remove old spent bloom/seed pods, twiggy growth wooden kitchen match size and smaller, dead twigs, branches or limbs and basically STOP. If, two limbs are competing for the same space select the most dominant and remove the other one.

Whatever you do when pruning crape myrtles ... DO NOT "cut back". This is a non-desirable action that ruins crape myrtles' natural shape of growth.

NOTE: There are many varieties and several types of crape myrtles on the market today. Prior to selecting for a specific location in the landscape always ask the retailer these questions:

- How tall does this variety normally grow here?
- How wide does this variety normally grow here?
- What is the usual bloom period? This is often classified as early, mid or late season.
- Is this variety mildew resistant?

Answers to these few questions will greatly aid in the decision process of which varieties to select, where they will be utilized in the landscape and reduce maintenance time.

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