

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

For: QA1048

I need to ask you if transplanting at the middle of this month is okay to do? We are transplanting a crepe myrtle and a vitex, and this is the only time that will be available.

I am asking because I have heard that transplanting should be done in late January or February. Confused. And how much of a root ball do we need per diameter of trunk?

Thank you for your time. - A. Z.

The best time to transplant any existing winter hardy woody landscape plant is during the dormant season. The dormant season occurs after the first hard freeze and remains until new growth begins in the spring. So, now, the middle of the month, end of the month are all acceptable times to transplant vitex, crape myrtle or any other winter hardy woody landscape plants.

For every inch in trunk diameter measured 12” above the soil line the soil ball should be a minimum of 10” and 12” is better. On multi trunked plants such as crape myrtles and vitex add the trunk's together to determine total width of soil ball. Dig the same depth. Remember, wider and deeper is better than narrow and shallow when sizing a root ball.

After the plant is dug replant at the same depth it was originally growing. Water thoroughly and mulch with 3 – 4” of bark mulch. Keep moist through the growing season.

I know you should try and refrigerate tulip bulbs for 6 weeks before planting if you can. I have done this successfully in the past planting in early January. My question is concerning daffodil bulbs. Should they be treated the same way? I got some bulbs a week ago and have not planted them yet. I haven't put them in the refrigerator either. What should I do? Refrigerate them for a while before planting, or plant them now?

Thanks. - K. W.

No member of the narcissus family requires chilling prior to planting.

I just had to replace a French drain that had been clogged by a willow tree roots. The tree has been removed and the drain replaced with plastic PVC. Here is my question, what can I plant along side the drain pipe (about 1 1/2 feet below) that will not cause problems later? I can plant about one foot back, but no farther because of my fence. Ideally, I would prefer privacy & shade. Would a yaupon holly, crape myrtle, or pomegranate tree be OK, or am I just asking for trouble?

If they will have roots that are too invasive, can you suggest something else? The area is on the south side of my house and my neighbor's house is about twenty feet away, so it gets direct sunlight, but is partially shaded during parts of the day because of shadows from the houses.

Thank you! I am stumped! - J. H.

There are some "ifs" here. If the location receives eight hours of full sun or more crape myrtles, pomegranate and any other full sun small tree/large shrub should work well. If the area receives less than day long full sun don't use crape myrtle or other full sun plants.

Tall growing hollies including yaupon and Nellie R. Stevens plus wax myrtle will do well in full sun to part shade.

If the plastic PVC pipe you replaced is solid, roots from any type of plant should not be a problem. Roots invade openings such as the holes in perforated pipe used for French drain systems.

Now is a great time to install any of the plants suggested or all types of winter hardy wood landscape plants. If you are not familiar with the USDA hardiness zone where you live visit <http://dallas-tx.tamu.edu/hort/hort.htm> and click on Texas Plant Cold Hardiness Map. This map covers the entire state of Texas and it's easy to find your specific county.

Always ask prior to purchasing "Is this plant hardy in my zone"? This simple but important question could prevent most problems with winter survival of landscape plants.

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