

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

For: QA1049

I read in a recent column that you mentioned applying pre-emergents for weeds. You made a slight mention of needing to apply a second application in May for grass/sand burs. What type or pre-emergent is needed for the burrs. I live in a county with sandy soil. The burrs are really bad except in the pasture where we fertilize annually. Any advice to get rid of the burrs would be greatly appreciated. Thanks.

PS: I had previously thought that fertilizing was the only way to get rid of this pest.- D. G. B.

While this is not the time of year to apply any pre-emergent I will share the requested information with you.

Pre-emergents for grass/sand burs are available in nurseries, hardware stores, building centers, farm stores and other retailers. Most products labeled to control grassy weeds are also labeled for grass/sand burs. Just ask your local retailers for assistance. You can always review the label to determine specific weeds controlled.

Timing is very critical to achieve desired results when using pre-emergents. Apply in zone 7b and 8a around March 1 and again late June. Remember; always apply according to label directions.

If you are not sure what USDA Plant Hardiness Zone you live in visit <http://dallas-tx.tamu.edu/hort/hort.htm> This map has all 254 counties and their zones in an easy to view format.

Note: These zones are the same ones often referred to on seed packets, in gardening articles and other references to plant hardiness. Example. If you live in zone 7 and wish to purchase hardy plants always by plants known to be hardy in zone 7 and do not use plants that are hardy in zone 8 or 9. Do not assume that all plants at retailers are winter hardy. Always ask if a prospective purchase is winter hardy in your specific zone.

I'm writing to you regarding my Banana Tree. By the way, I read your article in the local newspaper; this is what prompted me to send you an email.

I live at the lake and have had very good luck with my Banana Tree, but what I need to know is this; what is the best way to care for it during the winter. It's leaves have already been hurt by the cold weather, but do I need to cut it down to the ground or leave the stalk or what? If you could help me with this I'd be appreciative.

Thank you for your time. – S. C.

There is a minimum of three routes to take:

1. Cut the plant(s) off at ground level
2. Cut the plant(s) off at ground level and apply approximately 12" of your favorite mulch
3. Dig the entire root system after cutting of the damaged/dead top growth and bring inside to a freeze free area

All of these methods have worked successfully in Texas. However, there are no guarantees.

Bananas are "a hoot" to grow and if your plant(s) don't survive, install more next season and enjoy these puppies all over.

NOW is the time to:

- Make plans for your spring vegetable garden. Vegetable gardening begins the last week of Jan. with the planting of English/sweet peas and onion transplants.
- Have a soil test done. Visit <http://dallas-tx.tamu.edu/hort/hort.htm> and click on the Links button and then the soiltesting.tamu.edu link and print out the Soil Testing form. Follow the instructions and send to the address as soon as possible.
- Transplant any woody plants.
- Install bare root plants including but not limited to – fruit trees, shade trees, pecans, roses, blackberries and grapes.
- Develop beds for spring color. Begin using the Earth Kind™ method of soil improvement. In clay soils blend 3" of finished plant derived compost and 3" of expanded shale into the top 6" of native soil.
- Prune peach trees
- Apply dormant oil to fruit trees and pecan trees. Also apply to any ornamentals with an infestation of scale insects. Remember, read and follow label directions when using any gardening aid.
- Remove the tops of perennials and add to a compost
- Add leaves to a compost. DO NOT send them to the city landfill.
- Don't forget to check landscape plants for soil moisture prior to hard freezes. If the soil is dry, irrigate.
- Have all power equipment serviced. And, look for off-season bargains.
- Sharpen and repair if needed all hand tools.
- Install winter hardy landscape plants.
- If you need FREE help with a lawn, garden and/or landscape issue M – F, 8:30am – 4pm call the Help Desk at 214-904-3053.
- Plan to install new gardens in the landscape.

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