

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

For:QA1056

I'm a new gardener that's trying to get all the information possible. We are totally redoing our landscape because right now it looks like "the pits"! I would like information on trees, shrubs and other plants that do well in the Texas heat.

Our yard is full of low areas that need to be leveled before we can plant anything. What kind of soil is best to fill in these areas?

I also need to know about a good fast growing 'screen` type plant either tree or shrub.- L. S.

We could write one or more books on your requests, but space won't permit. Let me do the next best thing - which is taking a look at 'Dale Groom's Texas Gardening Guide' in a local bookstore. The book is loaded with landscape plant information.

Some of the better groups of trees for Texas include the oaks. In my opinion there is no better group of shrubs for general landscape purposes than hollies. Wildflowers, annual vinca, copper plants, salvia, moss rose, lantana are just a few of the color plants which will take Texas heat.

If the low places you refer to in you yard were over 2" deep I would try to match the leveling soil as near as possible to your current soil. If you were to fill in several inches and especially over a several square feet area the water retention and over all growing conditions may be significantly different.

One fast growing quality tree screen plant is Leyland cypress. It is soft to the touch, limbs and leaves from the ground up, evergreen that is Christmas tree shaped. Buford holly and Nellie R. Stevens holly are two large type fast growing quality evergreen screening shrubs. Upright growing junipers offer several selections to choose from. I suggest a visit to two or three full service retail garden centers/nurseries and see these and other plants ... up close and personal. This is the very best way for you to decide if you like the looks of specific plants.

Also, visit the world's #1 horticulture web site at:
<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu> for additional possibilities.

Ask questions of the sales staff at each location and take notes. Do all you're visiting, note taking, book reviewing and then put everything on paper BEFORE the first plant is purchased. It is much less costly and

time consuming to move plants, beds and other landscape items on paper than after they are installed.

Good luck on your projects in 2006. It sounds like you all will be rather 'yard-active' this season.

I am interested in information on avocado seeds and seedlings. Particularly concerning the planting and care after the seeds are rooted and ready for transplanting in soil. - V. D.

After seeds are in the stage you have described I would carefully pot then in a container nearly filled with a coarse well-drained potting soil. Leaving approximately a 1" space from the pot's top to the soil for watering purposes the seed would be set about 2" below the surface.

If I were going to start some avocado seeds for the fun of growing a 'house plant' from them the brownish outside seed coat would be removed. Then the seed would be planted directly in the soil for rooting and growing. It is necessary that the soil be kept moist and warm and in a sunny location. Be patient and the seed should sprout in the pot and begin growing a plant without the need for transplanting anytime soon. I would fertilize with a complete and balanced water soluble or pelletized fertilizer according to label directions.

After all dangers of frost have passed in the spring I would grow them outside in containers. Now is an acceptable time to start some this season.

Remember this, avocados are tropical in nature. So, no matter how large they get these babies need to be moved back inside before the first freeze or frost in the fall. I would then place them in front of south or west facing window locations.

I recently saw you demonstrate rose planting on TV. It was very helpful and I now plan to plant some for the first time. I'm most interested in growing roses and would appreciate your suggestions. - S. M.

Thanks for your compliment. I'm glad to be a part of your budding interest in roses.

Let me suggest you visit Earth Kind Roses on the Internet. This can be found through Google, enter Earth Kind Roses and click.

This location will bring you to the most accurate, reliable and timely information on roses easily grown in Texas. Once established - Earth Kind Roses are not sprayed, no pruning is needed, nor deadheading, these beauties are not fertilized and minimum water is applied. These roses are truly ... Earth Kind and Water Wise.

Dale Groom, Extension Horticulturist-Dallas County, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A & M University System, Native Texan, Author, Columnist, Radio/TV Host is also known statewide as The Plant Groom™. Send your lawn, garden and landscape questions to Dale at dalegroom@mycvc.net

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