

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

For: QA1058

Last year my crape myrtle had numerous bloom clusters, but most seemed to die off before blooming. Could you help me prevent this again this Year? What do I need to do?

Thank you. – G. H.

Much like life, there are no guaranteed with plants. However, there is hope and possibilities.

Blooms not opening on crape myrtles are most likely caused by one or two reasons. A severe infection of powdery mildew may impact blooms and like wise with aphids.

If you notice a white powdery looking substance on your plant's leaves and/or buds select an aid labeled for powdery mildew at your local nursery, read and follow label directions and control should be achieved. Remember, it's not a “given” that your plants in question will have a problem with powdery mildew it's an ... “if”.

Aphids, which are also called plant lice by some folks, suck fluids from crape myrtles, greens and any other plant they invade. While doing this they secrete sugar through their body walls and ‘honey dew’ falls on walks, patios furniture, walks and any other surface it falls on including vehicles plus provides a media for sooty mold to grow. Sooty mold looks like ... soot on the plant.

To prevent sooty mold control the aphids with an approved aid. Apply when needed according to label directions.

New growth on crape myrtles produces the most blooms. You may wish to apply a (N) nitrogen only fertilizer around April 1st to help stimulate new growth.

By controlling aphids and powdery mildew (as and if needed) plus applying (N) fertilizer according to label directions your crape myrtles should have a beautiful and showy year in 2006.

What kind of hedges will do well on a southern exposure with fifteen feet between my house and the next? - M.C.

Hedges are basically arrangements of shrubs. Some of the best shrubs we have that will make all sorts of hedges include the following:

- . Ilex altaclarensis 'Wilsonii' or Wilson Holly
- . Ilex cornuta 'Nellie R. Stevens' or Nellie R. Stevens Holly
- . Ilex cornuta 'Bufordi' or Buford Holly
- . Ilex cornuta 'Willowleaf' or Willowleaf Holly
- . Eleagnus pungens or simply Eleagnus
- . Viburnum odoratissimum or Sweet Viburnum

Now is a great time to select and plant any of these or other selections. I would suggest that you plant from container grown stock.

Hello Dale,

I have a situation that I hope you can help me with. I have a flowerbed area over a greywater leach field. The bed is on the west side of my house.

I am wondering what types of plants, shrubs, or trees would be able to tolerate the almost constantly moist soil and the hot afternoon sun. The area gets almost full sun from 2:00 to 6:00 in the summer. I live 2 hours south of Dallas on I-45 (East Texas - Zone 8).

I really appreciate your time and advice.

Thanks, - M. J.

M. J., You are limited with the parameters given. One possibility is to install willow trees because these trees utilize lots of water. After they grow and provide adequate shade plant ferns under them. I haven't suggested willow trees for anyone in a decade or more but in your situation they may fit.

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