

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

QA1073

I want to "trim" my crape myrtle to look like the ones I see around town with one or two "trunks". When is a good time to cut off the extra limbs. Can I do it now when they are about to bloom or can I do it in the fall/winter when they are not blooming? - D. P.

The form you are describing is called Tree Form. Select limbs, branches, twigs and other parts may be removed from crape myrtles anytime of the year. The best time is at the end of our winters.

The Jan. - Feb. time frame should work well for what I believe you wish to accomplish. Take your time and remove one part at a time to get an overall look prior to removing to many parts. It's very difficult to glur the parts back on.

We have a garden with several big beautiful tomato plants with blooms on them – about 5 ft. high – No tomatoes on them yet – Is that normal? Is there anything we should do? I have pinched off all of the feeder stems and that still has not produced any results. Please advise me of what you would do. - R. B.

If you have planted varieties well adapted to our Texas summer climate just wait. They should set fruit if you have good air movement and/or flying insects around them. Tomatoes have complete flowers and are self pollinating. Air movement and bees or other flying insects are aids to insure this occurs. No pollination = no fruit.

Varieties that normally do well in a cool spring or in other states where the temperatures are not as constantly as high as ours will have great difficulty in setting fruit even with good air movement and favorable pollinating insects. To prevent this situation always plant the best heat tolerant varieties.

I never remove side suckers on tomato plants. I construct 5' tall x 18" wide cages to grow each plant in. More plant = more tomatoes.

My husband and I bought our first house over a year ago and have thoroughly enjoyed your Texas Gardening Guide. I don't know anything about gardening, so it's been very helpful. We have a bit of a problem yard. We have 14 full grown trees on .14 of an acre. I believe at least 7 of them are oaks. Our house faces west but doesn't get any sun in the summer due to the trees. Right now our front yard is evergreen. I think it's different types of holly, so the texture and color are almost identical. The previous owner seemed to really love pink because any color that we do have is various shades of it. I'm not a fan of pink in that large of a quantity. I'm trying to find a non-pink way to add some color to our front yard. There are 2 pink Crape Myrtle that don't bloom because of the trees. Since there is so much shade, the space is dark and I think could look great with really bold color.

Long story short I really like day lilies, but have not found a variety for shade. Can you recommend one and where I might be able to find it? Or any other type of high color thing I could put there? I am attaching a pic of our house for reference. There are 2 live oak in front and to the side of the red oaks in the picture. We get some dappled sunlight in the afternoon, but we are very well protected by the trees. I believe are in zone 8a.

Thanks so much for your time, - E. K.

There are no daylilies for shady locations.

In shady locations Aucuba is colorful. These are ideal locations for beds of ferns. Mahonia and Aralia are two additional possibilities. Seasonal colors from various caladiums, coleus and begonias may be utilized. Cool season color from inpatients is also a possibility

All of these may be planted in beds or in large containers.

During the winter move your crape myrtles to sunny locations. After re-establishment they should bring some super summer color. And, I love hollies. They are my favorite shrub group.

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