

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

QA1074

Dale,

Can you tell me how I can get a soil test for my garden?

Thanks, - G. K.

Sure. Send your request and a long self addressed envelope with two 1st class stamps on it to me at - Soil Test Kit, 10056 Marsh Lane, Suite B-101, Dallas, TX 75229. When we receive your request and stamped envelope an instruction sheet and two soil sample containers will be sent to you ... straight away.

After receiving your results you may wish to call the Master Gardeners Help Desk with questions. Live free personal help is available for all types of horticultural questions at 214-904-3053, M - F, 8:30am - 4pm.

I would like to order one of your books. Please advise me on how to do this. - P. M.

Which of my current two books do you wish to order?

'Dale Groom's Texas Gardening Guide' or 'Month-By-Month-Gardening- In-Texas' are both \$29. each, tax, postage and handling included or the set of two for \$55.

My mailing/order address is; Dale Groom, P. O. Box 365, Eustace, TX 75124.

Two years ago my wife and I sodded a portion of our front yard, about 50 by 30 feet area with centipede grass squares. We laid it over the grass that was already there. We kept it watered sufficiently and it got green and lush. This was early spring and it went dormant when late fall came. It got enough rainfall during the winter months but when spring returned it did not return.

We chalked it up to bad grass and re-sodded with St. Augustine after applying a layer of landscape mixture over the dead centipede. Once again with plenty of watering it turned green and lush and when spring returned the St. Augustine did not return. So, for the third time, I had a load of top soil delivered and I spread it evenly over the entire area and we re-sodded for the last time with St. Augustine and, yes, it is green and lush. Can you give me your views on this, what could make the grass not return from dormancy? Like I said this is the last time.

Thank You, - L. and C. W.

Grass will terminate during the winter if sufficient moisture is not present for the root system. Our winter of 2005-06 was ... dry.

Lawns less than one full season old will have more difficulty in surviving prolonged dry soil conditions than a well established planting. This is true any time of the year including winter.

Unless we have a severe winter with prolonged hard freezing temperatures there is no common reason why a lawn sodded in the spring should not green up the following spring except lack of soil moisture at the root zone. During this growing season; mow frequently, fertilize in Sept. according to label directions and irrigate thoroughly as needed.

Frequent mowing will increase the thickness of lawns and is the single most important activity we can do to encourage branching. Fertilizer and especially (N) nitrogen should be utilized sparingly during the first year. I would not fertilize during our current heat. However, do fertilize in Sept. according to your package instructions on the product you purchase. Do not water on a preset schedule. Do water as required to maintain moisture at the root zone. It is documented that it's much better to irrigate less often but thoroughly versus often and lightly.

Dale's Notes:

- \* I know this is the time of year we are all looking for a ... cool place but don't forget to irrigate your plants as needed to survive the summer. This summer is another example of why we should all be utilizing Water Wise plants and techniques.
- \* Water is best applied to the landscape and/or garden prior to 10am. Do not water in the heat of the day or spray water high into the air. These actions can reduce water actually being applied where desired by as much as 50%.
- \* Mulching all plant's root systems 3-4" deep with an organic mulch such as pine bark, hardwood bark or shredded tree trimmings will conserve soil moisture, reduces weed competition and help create a favorable root environment.
- \* Enjoy the summer but be attentive to your plants.

Dale Groom, Extension Horticulturist -Dallas County, Texas Cooperative Extension, Native Texan, Columnist, Author, Radio/TV Host is also known state wide as The Plant Groom(tm) send your questions to Dale at [dalegroom@mycvc.net](mailto:dalegroom@mycvc.net)

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