

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

QA1075

I have a question.

I have been through two Bradford pear trees and looks like one Aristocrat pear as of now in the last year. I have planted them in spring to summer in my back yard.

All three have been 12-15 feet tall. They all within a few days of planting have withering discolored leaves that eventually fall off leaving me with a live stick.

What am I doing wrong? - J. P.

The best time to plant any ornamental pear tree or any other landscape tree in Texas is during fall. Oct. and Nov. are two top months for this type of planting.

Keep this in mind. The soil and root mix which we call the root ball has a different "mix" than your native soil. It needs to be kept moist and not wet until roots are established into the surrounding native soil. This is most critical during it's 1st year in a landscape location. Mulching 3-4" deep with your favorite organic mulch such as pine bark, hardwood bark, shredded tree trimmings or similar materials is advised. When irrigating do make sure the soil ball itself is moistened and not just the surrounding soil.

The correct planting of container grown or balled and burlap (B&B) trees is as follows:

- * Pick a location where the soil has natural drainage. Do not plant trees in locations where water stands or the soil remains wet after rains.

- * Measure the soil ball height

- * Dig the planting hole no deeper than the soil ball height. Do not dig deeper and back fill with loose soil. You may dig the hole multiple ball width wide if desired.

- * Install the tree and back fill with native soil only. DO NOT use any compost, peat moss, planting mix or any other soil amendments when planting trees.

- * Irrigate thoroughly, irrigate thoroughly and irrigate thoroughly.

- * Stake if necessary.

- * Apply 3-4" of your favorite organic mulch from the tree trunk to the outside edge of the planting hole.

One additional note. It is better to have a tree's root ball an inch or two above the surrounding natural grade than below grade. Trees and other plants installed with soil over their root system is not desirable and often results in termination.

We have a beautiful, large Cherry Laurel tree in our front yard. It has split places at the base of the trunk near the ground. These places go up the trunk 8 to 10 inches. We fear it will die. What can we do to correct this problem? We would hate to lose this tree since it shades a west bedroom.

Thanks. - A. P.

This may be nothing more than a natural process. Bark is dead material and it often splits. If you have a strong concern that your plant in question has a potential problem other than a natural occurring event contacting a Consulting Arborist is advised.

Consulting Arborists should be found in your yellow pages under Arborist or Tree Care. They can visit with you on site and render a personal diagnosis and treatment ... if needed.

My son has a problem with worms on a Cedar tree. They have killed the tree, but they are still there. What do you suggest for killing them?

They are little worms that have been in a small cocoon. The cocoon looks like a small bud. They blended in with the tree and he did not realize they were there until they came out. He thought the tree was dying due to lack of water.

Thank you, - D. T.

These bags need to be physically removed and disposed of. Do not remove and drop on the ground. If the worm is still alive and in the bag they will come out of their "home" and crawl back up the tree or another near by.

Due to the nature or construction of their cocoons it is very difficult to achieve control with garden aids if they are inside of them. If you find these critters outside their homes grazing the biological product BT will control them. Remember, always read and follow label directions when using any gardening aid.

Dale Groom, CEA - Horticulture, Native Texan, Columnist, Radio/TV Host, Author is also known state wide as The Plant Groom(tm). Send your questions to Dale at dalegroom@mycvc.net. To speak with a Master Gardener for free help with horticultural issues M-F, 8:30am - 4pm dial 214-904-3053.

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