

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

QA1077

I would like to plant some trees such as crepe myrtle or oleander around the border of my yard. One question I have is when do I plant these? Another concern is to find out what tree I could plant along the fence line in back that would not need a lot of extra watering in the summer, because I am planning to travel some? - D.R.

P.S. We love your column and read it regularly. The information is very helpful.

Crape myrtles and oleanders are both very Water Wise once established. Crape myrtle is hardy state wide except in USDA Plant hardiness zone 6, our panhandle area. Oleanders are hardy along the Gulf Coast, Rio Grande Valley and other USDA zone 9 locations. Exceptions are 'Hardy Red', 'Sugarland Red' and 'Hardy Pink'. These specific varieties are usually also hardy in zones 8 and 7.

The very best time to install any winter hardy landscape plantings including trees and shrubs is in the Fall. Oct. and Nov. are ideal.

Most trees are Water Wise after establishment. Willow is not. Some super selections include; Shumard Red Oak, Live Oak, Bur Oak, Cedar Elm, Lacebark Elm and Chinese Pistachio. Two evergreens to be included are Eastern Red Cedar and Leylandi Cypress.

I grow all these oaks, Chinese Pistachio, Lacebark Elm and Leylandi Cypress in our rural landscape. None have been irrigated this year nor in 2005.

Remember, the ability of trees to be Water Wise depends on specific variety selected and culture to aid it's establishment.

I'm pleased to know you enjoy Ask The Plant Groom(tm) and receive useful information. I strive to provide timely, reliable and accurate assistance. This is column 1,077 and I plan to do another 1,000 or more.

About three years ago my neighbor planted Bermuda grass in a spot in his yard when he was having trouble with his St. Augustine. Of course it came over into my yard and now I have an area about 5ft wide that runs the length of my side yard- about 5 X 10 ft. I have tried everything to get rid of this. Every week I cut and bag the seeds. Last spring I bought something from the nursery that was supposed to get rid of it but it did not help. Is there anything I can do other than dig the entire area up and re-sod with St. Augustine?

Thank you for any help. - T. H.

I went to the Doctor on this to affirm my recommendations for you or secure another 'route' for you to take. The Dr. in this case is James A. McAfee, PhD, Associate Professor and Extension Turfgrass Specialist, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A & M University System. Jim confirmed my thoughts. The best way to control Bermuda grass in St. Augustine grass is to mow, fertilize and water to benefit the St. Augustine.

When properly cared for St. Augustine will put the "squeeze out" on Bermuda grass. One

suggestion is to install a specific edging material and maintain a clean edge at your boundary line. The goal here is to prevent a future invasion into your St. Augustine by Bermuda once control is obtained. A clean edge may be maintained by mechanical means such as a string line trimmer, as needed applications with products containing the active ingredient glyphosate or both. Always read and follow label directions when using any lawn or garden aid.

The process of squeezing Bermuda grass out of St. Augustine plantings is a slow process but obtainable. No "magic wand" here to obtain your stated goal.

Dale, we would like to know if you can send us a soil sample kit and also where we would send these soil samples to be analyzed? We have two large magnolia trees in our front yard and we can not get the grass to grow there, especially around the drip line. We think maybe we have used too much fertilizer or not enough or the wrong kind. We would appreciate any help you can give us and we will gladly pay for the soil sample kit as well as the test results.

Thank you very much. - D. and M. C.

Sure. send your request for soil testing to; Dale Groom, Soil Text Kit, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A & M University System, 10056 Marsh Lane, Suite B-101, Dallas, TX 75229 and include a long self addressed envelope with two 1st class stamps on it with your request. The kit will be sent as soon as we receive your request and envelope with required postage.

No turfgrass will grow long term under the canopy of Southern magnolias due to insufficient sunlight and this does include St. Augustine grass. While St. Augustine grass is shade tolerant it will not grow well long term in the absence of sufficient solar energy. It needs (4) hours of direct sunlight or (8) hours of 50% sun/50% shade daily to receive sufficient light.

Alternatives to turfgrass include many varieties of groundcovers or mulch the entire area with your favorite bark mulch.

Dale Groom, Extension Horticulturist, Master Gardener Coordinator-Dallas County, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A & M University System, Native Texan, Columnist, Author, Radio/TV Host is also known statewide as The Plant Groom(tm). Send your lawn, garden, landscape or other horticultural questions to Dale at [dalegroom@mycvc.net](mailto:dalegroom@mycvc.net)

Copyright 2006 by Groom Media and all rights are reserved.