

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

QA1078

For seven years and my St. Augustine grass has always been a yellow green color, not the dark green I see in most yards. I use a 26-2-13 with 2% iron fertilizer, on my yard. I have added more iron, but that does not seem to help. Can you tell me what to do to get my grass a darker green color with a healthier look? Thank you - J. A.

Start with a Soil Test. Currently, you do not have any accurate idea of what the soil has and does not have regarding available plant nutrients to grow a great looking lawn. It sounds as if you have been trying to "cover the bases" but are not hitting a home run.

All county offices of Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A & M University System have available soil test forms and soil sample containers. Visit your local county office, secure the form, complete the form(s) and send in the sample(s) as per the instructions on the form. If you wish to speak with me regarding the results of the test and what to do next my office number is 214-904-3053.

To receive a FREE Soil Text Kit by mail send me your request and include a long self addressed envelope with two 1st class stamps on it to: Dale Groom, Soil Text Kit, 10056 Marsh Lane, Suite B-101, Dallas, TX 75124. When we receive your's or anyone's request with the required envelope as described we will send it out the same day.

Let's start here and move forward.

Due to the lack of rainfall in the area deer come to our homesite at night to feed on watered plant life. Numerous plants have been damaged to their feeding, Altheas, roses, tomato garden, and several potted plants, but my main concern is tree damage. They have destroyed several young (five to seven foot) pecan trees with their horns. Two of my shade trees in their fifth year have become targets and the bark has been damaged. I have placed poultry wire around the tree trunk to discourage the horn thrashing.

Two questions. Should I paint the tree trunk damage with something to save the trees, and is there something I can do to discourage their presence? Chemical spray or dust?

Thanks, - R. C.

It may not help but ... you are not alone.

When deer get hungry enough they will eat nearly anything, I probably would too.

Know this, there are no "deer proof" landscapes/gardens but there are deer resistant landscapes and gardens. Pages 226 - 229 in my book 'Dale Groom's Texas Gardening Guide provides information regarding these possibilities. Copies of this book should be at local libraries. If you wish to receive a personal copy send your request and a \$29, check or money order to TGG, P. O. Box 365, Eustace, TX 75124 and I'll send you a personalized copy by mail.

Protecting trees from these guys is paramount in the quality and quantity of their health, growth and vigor. Usually four or more strong steel posts with wire similar to your application spaced a distance to prevent their horns or bodies from reaching the trunks and limbs of the target tree(s) is require to provide adequate protection.

We maintain a large "this is my property" dog that prevents deer from visiting our trees, shrubs or other landscape plantings. He is an Australian shepard. He discourages deer, rabbits, squirrels from invading our landscape and structures plus his marled eyes are on the look out for birds flying overhead too.

There are various types of repellants available however I can't speak to their effectiveness. I'll stick with Frankie.

The tree does not need any "paint" on the damaged areas. If it makes you feel better to be doing something paint the areas if you wish but I do not recommend the practice.

I'm looking for a tree that fits most of the following traits if possible please:  
If you know of any prospects that fit all of some of the below I certainly would appreciate it.

Thanks so much. - T. R.

Because no specific height range was given I'm going for a tree-form yaupon holly here. 'Pride of Houston' is one of my favored varieties.

There are very few plants that will meet all your requirements. Let's go through a few notes on your requirements below. My notes are following your specifications with a dash between them

- 1) Evergreen - There are many of these from live oak, pine, cedar to southern magnolia
- 2) Full sun - Most trees do best in full sun unless they do best as understory trees such as most dogwoods.
- 3) Drought tolerant - There's a wide range of possibilities here from a small scrub oak to a massive bur oak and all sized in between. I love leylandi cypress as a drought tolerant evergreen.
- 4) slender trunk/non/invasive roots - Does this mean 'skinny' or always small diameter trunk? I'm not sure of your trunk requirements. Properly spaced trees rarely have problems with roots invading planting areas or structures. The problem generally lies when a tree with a 60' wide spread is planted 10' from a structure.
- 5) Fast growing - Even the so called "slow growing" trees will put on 3-4' of growth per year is properly located and maintained.
- 6) Blooming - This is very limiting in your search. Souther magnolia is evergreen and it blooms, several hollies are evergreen and they "bloom" however most of their long term color comes from their berries.
- 7) Outward branching/lofty - I'm unsure of your query here. Please contact me with more details and we will proceed.

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

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