

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

QA1080

Hello Dale,

I enjoy your article and clip many to add to my gardening books. I have an old question for this hot time of year. Is there anything I can do other than digging up the crabgrass "bouquets" to get rid of it?? We have a very large yard (approx 3 acres) but I am not trying to develop the entire place into a lush lawn. We had a Bermuda grass lawn laid 3 years ago about 15 ft or so surrounding the house when we had landscaping and sprinkler system added. A concrete drive acts as the barrier between our landscaped lawn and the remaining acreage. We fertilize in the spring and in the fall. It looks like we are feeding the crabgrass instead of the Bermuda. The crabgrass has gone crazy and is about to overtake the lawn!!! Is there anything practical I can do or am I fighting a losing battle????

Thanks, - P. W

The answer is yes this can be done but let me expand.

Crab grass is an annual and will die when the 1st hard freeze arrives this season. New plants arrive from the previous year's crop of seeds. There are a group of products that are widely available called weed preventers or pre-emergents.

To achieve desired control of crab grass or other target weeds it's important to:

- * Select the appropriate aids
- * Apply at the proper time according to label directions

These aids do not achieve the desired results if applied to early or after the seeds have germinated. Timing is critical to their successful utilization. These times to apply will vary depending on which part of the state we live in. Let me recommend contacting your County Agent's office of Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A & M University System for specific recommended dates in your county. If you wish to communicate with me I'm at 214-904-3053 and I'll help you too.

It is often said by turfgrass professionals that the best weed control is a thick, healthy and vigorous growing lawn. This is achieved by mowing frequently, supplying supplemental irrigation as and when needed plus providing supplemental nutrients to the soil if needed. A soil test is the best way to know what nutrients your soil has, is deficient in and its' pH. To secure a free soil test kit send your request to me at Soil Test Kit, 10056 Marsh Lane, Suite B-101, Dallas, TX 75229. Be sure to include a long, self addressed envelope with two 1st class stamps on it with your request. No stamped self addressed envelope = no Soil Text Kit.

You may find from soil test results that your soil is low to very low in (N) nitrogen and very high in (P) phosphorous for example. The correct amounts of (N) are important in developing a thick turf. The single most important physical cultural activity we can do to encourage thick turf is ... mow frequently. Mow frequently enough to remove 1/3 of your grass blades height each time the grass is cut is recommended. Mowing frequency that removes more than 1/3 of the blade (grasses leaves) at each mowing may lead to a thinner stand of grass and ... weed problems.

The best time to irrigate is early am, that's prior to 10am. Water only when needed and do so deeply and thoroughly.

This often means apply 1 - 1 ½" of water weekly when do rain occurred to provide needed soil moisture. DO NOT irrigate on some preset schedule for 10-15 minutes daily or every other day. This practice will waste potable water, is expensive, is not good for the turf and is not ... Water Wise.

More in-depth information is available on-line at <http://aggieturf.tamu.edu> and <http://dallas-tx.tamu.edu/hort>. I encourage you to visit both of them.

The best time to irrigate is early am, that's prior to 10am. Water only when needed and do so deeply and thoroughly. This often means apply 1 - 1 ½" of water weekly when do rain occurred to provide needed soil moisture. DO NOT irrigate on some preset schedule for 10-15 minutes daily or every other day. This practice will waste potable water, is expensive, is not good for the turf and is not ... Water Wise.

More in-depth information is available on-line at <http://aggieturf.tamu.edu> and <http://dallas-tx.tamu.edu/hort>. I encourage you to visit both of them.

So, yes there is a way to do it and I hope these suggestions help.

This past winter I set out several young pecan trees (5"7) feet tall. You know what this drought is doing to plant life. They are in full sun and I have done my best to water them mostly in the root system. Problem is, they are dry at the top, and surviving about half way down. I know it is not good to top trees, so how do I handle this to keep them? - L. C.

If what I'm seeing through your description is that the bark has shrunk from a specific height upward on your trees in question is correct you have ... big trouble. The answer is, there's no definite answer and here's why.

I do not recommend any fruit or nut tree be purchased and planted if the bark is shriveled. This usually indicates these specific selections will not come out in the spring and survive. Your pecan trees may survive and sprout new buds and growth next spring. Should this occur within the next year you will need to make the decision whether to remove the dead tops and attempt to salvage the new growth or eliminate and replant. You need a plan in mind or on paper as to how the trees will be trained in the future if you decide to prune and regrow

An option is to replant with new and viable recommended varieties this Dec. or Jan. If you are after beautiful well shaped mature trees this may be the best route to go.

Pecan trees need to be planted in full sun locations with well drained soils. During their early establishment it is critical adequate soil moisture is present in their root zones. They are drought tolerant once established but it's up to the grower to help them reach establishment. While they need soil moisture at the root zone they will tolerate prolonged wet soils. Constantly wet soils will destroy roots ability to absorb moisture and translocate it throughout the vascular system even though they may be setting water. Available moisture at the root zone is desirable. Dry or constantly wet conditions in this zone are not favorable to root establishment and healthy tree growth.

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). You may send your lawn, garden, landscape or other horticultural questions to Dale at dalegroom@mycvc.net. To speak with a Master Gardener M-F, 8:30a-4p dial 214-904-3053.

Copyright 2006 by Groom Media and all rights are reserved.

