

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

QA1081

The edges of some leaves on a shade tree in my yard are turning brown. Should I be concerned? - S. H.

The problem most often occurs throughout Texas during our typical July and August “blast furnace” heat. Some trees have more difficulty than others during this time.

Water as needed in the tree’s drip line. The drip line is located at the outer most reach of a tree’s spread.

I see lots of beautiful crape myrtles in bloom and would like to know if now is an OK time to plant them? – D. K.

They are nice aren’t they? They are super blooming shrubs for Texas!!!

Container grown crape myrtles may be successful planted now. The best time to plant is during Oct. –Nov.

A couple of thoughts/suggestions for you.

- Decide which color(s) you prefer while the plants are in bloom.
- Visit local retail nurseries to secure the named varieties or cultivars you wish to plant and record this on paper. Additional locations I suggest visiting include Botanical Gardens, Arboretums and other public facilities including parks. Look for labels that name crape myrtles and jot the ones you like down.
- Create a planting plan yourself or work with a professional with the installation to be done this fall.
- Some varieties of crape myrtles under less than ideal conditions could have issues with powdery mildew. One way to help prevent this from occurring is ask for, purchase and only plant powdery mildew resistant cultivars.
- Remember. Crape myrtles are similar to us in one way ... they come in all heights and widths. So, if you want a red variety to only be 6’ tall then purchase a variety that only reaches this height. Please DO NOT buy and plant a tall growing variety such a ‘Natchez’ which may reach 30’ tall and keep it “whacked” back to 6’. This practice is crape myrtle butchering at its’ finest. Just don’t be a part of this activity.

• Is one bark mulch better than another? I hear some folks saying we should only use one type.

– R. S.

No mulch is good if it's not used including bark. The best mulch? It's the one you use.

Apply bark mulches 3 – 4” deep and add approximately 1’ annually to maintain this depth. Bark mulches decompose or break down at the soil line, which is a positive activity at approximately 1” per year in Texas. Adding replacement mulch at 1” per year will maintain the recommend depth.

Quality mulching benefits occur with all types of bark mulch. Use the type(s) you prefer.

**Dale’s Water Wise Tips:** This time of year one only needs to look at the water bill to know it take a \$ or \$\$ to maintain most landscapes and gardens in acceptable green conditions. Let me strongly recommend that all new plantings and retro plant installations be Water Wise.

Water Wise plantings, landscapes and gardens subscribe to the following principals.

1. Create a plan. It does not need to be a complicated plan. However, it should include native and well-adapted plants known to survive our Texas climate with minimum water usage after establishment.
2. Perform through soil preparation prior to installing the first plant. Time, energy, effort and dollars spent in soil preparation are wise investments.
3. Install plants properly and at the best time of year to obtain relatively quick establishment. In Texas, the fall is an excellent time to install woody winter hardy plant material in the landscape and gardens. It’s my favorite time to plant them.
4. After planting is complete – mulch, mulch, mulch with a minimum of 3 – 4” of your favorite mark mulch. And, maintain this layer year round for the life of your plantings. While some folks may promote or favor one mulch more than others, no mulch is good if it’s not used. So, mulch, mulch and mulch all your plantings.
5. Properly maintain your plantings. If you selected minimum care well adapted and low water use plants effort here is greatly reduced. When water is applied do so during early morning and thoroughly. Only irrigate when needed. DO NOT water on a preset schedule or lightly.

Following the above five basic principles will greatly reduce the usage of potable water throughout in our Texas landscapes and gardens while maintaining great looks

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