

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

QA1089

I have a problem with a tree in my yard. I think it is a non-bearing mulberry. All summer, Grackles the big, black, messy birds have chosen this tree to roost. I don't know if they are the problem or if it could be the many squirrels around here.

The problem: There are two areas on big limbs that have been stripped of their bark. On one of the limbs an area of about two feet long looks like teeth marks all around the limb. I have never seen anything like this before. Can you offer some suggestions as to what this may be and what I should do to keep my tree alive and healthy?

Thank you so much for any help you can give me. - N. S.

Based on the information provided your tree may be experiencing the effects of squirrels visits. I'm unaware of any bird that chews tree bark, squirrels do.

If the limbs in question have the bark removed down to the "wood" which is xylem tissue totally around a specific location the limb will very likely die from this point outward. Trapping and removing the squirrels should help prevent additional damage.

Removing dead limbs, supplying supplemental irrigation as and when needed plus nutrients will help trees to become more vigorous and heal physical damage. A soil test will let you know what soil nutrients are needed to help your tree become more healthy. Soil Test forms and sample containers are available state wide at local County Offices of Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A & M University System. We native Texans typically call these offices ... the County Agent's office.

If you wish, send me a long self addressed envelope with two 1st class stamps on it and we will send you a soil test kit free. Send your note and envelope with required postage to Dale Groom, Soil Text Kit, 10056 Marsh Lane Suite B-101, Dallas, TX 75229. Note; this offer is good for anyone reading this column.

I read your column in a recent edition of my local newspaper that you would not recommend Red Tip Photinia as a hedgerow. I love my Red Tip Photinia in my backyard as a hedgerow to separate my backyard and my husbands workspace. It grew fast and needs no care except for an occasional trimming. What is so bad about them as it can be eliminated if necessary? I always read your column and appreciate all the good advice. - F. S.

In a very high percent of urban landscapes state wide where Photinia frazeri commonly known as Red Tips are utilized a chronic foliar disease often breaks out. It is difficult to impossible for many Texas home owners/gardeners to control thi disease problem. The holly 'Nellie R. Stevens has the same character, growth habit and size as Photinia f. without any disease problems. I highly recommend this beautiful holly for folks seeking tall and wide evergreen shrubs to be used as

specimens or screening plantings. Photinia f. and Nellie R. should never be used as foundation plantings around single story homes or under windows and given wide birth for two story homes.

Photinia frazeri may reach 15'+ tall and 12'+ wide however it is often cropped or perhaps a more appropriate term "chopped" back applies here to 5' or less and grown in enclosed areas with poor air movement. This cultural practice and micro-environments provides conditions favorable to foliar disease problems with Photinia f.

Judy, my child bride of 37 years and I live in the country and our home is on a doodle bug sand hill, no fences and great air movement with full sun for our Photinia f. planting. Our planting is 12 years old and has never had a leaf spot issue. Full sun, great air movement and no chopping, hacking or pruning back is done to these babies . The 60' long row is 15' tall by 12' wide and beautiful.

Bottom line? In urban landscapes Photinia frazeri is most often problematic and I do not recommend its use because of this disease issue. It rural or other open areas with great air movement, full sun and no pruning it should work well.

Mr. Groom When we bought our house this July, the grass was dead in spots. It was brown from not being watered. My husband "revived" the grass with regular watering and some good fertilizer. It really looked nice and now some creature is rooting around in the grass, pulling up the roots and killing the grass. We cannot put a live trap out because we live in a neighborhood. Is there something we can put on the grass that will deter this animal from eating my grass? - B. W.

Congratulations on your husband's efforts.

Traps are used throughout urban settings to capture and release critters without physically harm. If you suspect a relatively long nosed visitor with small ears that carries armor on its' back as the potential cause there are special traps available and techniques.

Send me a long self addresses envelope and we will send you a pamphlet on how to trap these lawn visiting guests .My address is Dale Groom, 10056 Marsh Lane, Suite B-101, Dallas, TX 75229.

I do not know of any aide that may be spread throughout a lawn to prevent these pesky visitors.

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

To speak with a Dallas County Master Gardener M-F, 8:30a-4p dial 214-904-3053.

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