

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

QA1107

I live in the North Central Texas area of Coppell and have a Bradford pear tree in my front yard. It has several roots that are partially exposed above ground. Is it possible to remove the roots or some of them or should I cover them with soil?

I also have a Bermuda lawn that during this past summer died out at the upper portion of my lawn under the Bradford pear. It is basically dirt in this area. Should I try to plant sod, or will the shade from the tree prevent it from surviving? Any suggestions? - B. C.

The solution is the same for your situation in north, south, east or west Texas and with all tree varieties under the expressed conditions you have described. Often one or two roots may be removed successfully without harm to the subject trees' overall health. However, if the tree in question has exposed roots in all quadrants of its' canopy DO NOT remove all of them.

Attempting to cover exposed roots with additional soil usually provides less than desirable results. What may be done successfully is to blend organic matter into the soil between the roots and install a planting of your favorite groundcover. As the groundcover grows it will disguise the roots plus cover the areas where your Bermuda grass will not grow due to the shade provided.

So, my suggestions for your issues are; don't remove any roots, amend the soil, install a groundcover and ... live happily ever after.

I have a deodar cedar that is just about 5 ½ feet tall that I planted 2 yrs ago. I know it is drought resistant once established so I keep it water as needed during the hot summer. But, not much has happened growth wise. Should I fertilizer? What can you recommend?

Thanks. - M. B.

These past two summers have been brutal on all types of trees including evergreen just to survive. This environmental condition could also effect overall growth.

You may wish to have the soil analyzed to determine if there is a need for additional nutrients to be applied to the soil. Soil test forms and soil sample containers are available at all Texas Cooperative Extension offices. Being a native Texan we typically call these the County Agent's Office. These offices are open 8 am - 4:30 pm, M - F. We will send you two sample containers and one instruction sheet free if you will send your request and include a long self addressed envelope with two first class stamps on it to; Soil Test Kit, 10056 Marsh Lane, Suite B-101, Dallas, TX 75229. And, this offer is good for anyone

reading this column.

If your soil test results indicate a recommendation for additional soil nutrients then follow the suggestions.

These beauties greatly benefit from a 3 - 4" layer of organic mulch such as shredded tree trimmings or bark covering the entire root system. Providing adequate moisture and nutrients if and when needed is important. However, so is favorable environmental conditions. Maintaining a 3 - 4" layer of an organic mulch will aid in accomplishing this goal for your plants' root system. Remember, "you can't grow healthy plants without healthy root systems".

Can you tell me what kind of care is necessary to grow *Cycas revoluta* outdoors in Anna, TX? If there are differences between juvenile and adult plant care, I would appreciate information on those differences as well.

If conditions aren't suitable for growing *C. revoluta* outside, could you recommend another variety of *Cycas*? Perhaps *C. panzihuaensis*?

Thank you very much. - D. A.

*Cycas revoluta* commonly known as Sago Palm, *C. circinalis*, *C. medina* or other *Cycas*/*Cycad* species are not reliably winter hardy in any area north of our coast and the Rio Grande Valley. And, in severe winters could terminate in these locations also.

Yes, there are microclimates where this ancient tropical carry over group of plants from the dinosaurs times will survive outside in some selected Texas locations. My council is to select the species and varieties you enjoy and grow them in large containers which could be relocated to shelter from cold when needed.

Care from seedling through mature specimen is basically the same. Supply water sufficiently to prevent soil dryness in the root zone. DO NOT keep the soil wet especially in less than ideal soil drainage conditions. Very little if any fertilizer is usually needed. However, in some potting soil mixes complete and balanced fertilizers of your choosing applied according to label directions may be prudent.

I like all of this family and choosing one or more as well as recommending species is purely subjective. I suggest selecting the species you like. This usually makes it more enjoyable whether growing this relic from thousands of years in the past or new hybrids recently developed of your favorite perennial family.

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