

Ask The Plant Groom™ by Dale Groom, The Plant Groom™

QA1108

I am trying to decide what kind of tree to plant in my front yard. We live in the Dallas area. I'd like a shade tree that would be good for kids to climb in about 8-10 years. I had an old oak but it became infected with 'oak decline' and we had to cut it down so I am wondering if we should stay away from oaks. Any ideas? Thank you soooo much. – J. P.

I'm sorry to hear about the loss of your tree. Unfortunately oak wilt is a problem in some areas of Texas.

I always loved to climb in trees while growing up in Brownwood. And, I have fond memories of climbing in trees at our elementary school of Woodland Heights with classmates.

Here's some suggestions for you that will do well in nearly all areas of TX; Chinese pistachio, Texas red oak, cedar elm, lacebark elm and Texas green ash. Additional possibilities are available at <http://dallas-tamu.edu/> then click on; Horticulture, Plants for Dallas County and Deciduous or Evergreen Trees. You will find heights, widths, growth rates, fall colors, blooms, which listings are natives and the trees that are WaterWise. Trees on this list will do well throughout Texas.

I have a new home in Whitehouse. I ran out of money before being able to "put in a yard." I have a good growth of rye grass right now. We had to do this because of "washing" last fall. I would like to spray hydro-mulch Bermuda grass this spring (or however you say it). However, if money again prevents me from doing this, can we plant Bermuda seed? If so, do we have to till up the ground beforehand to make it work?

Thanks for your help. – J. T.

Congratulations on the new home!!!

I do understand regarding funds to accomplish all the goals we would like to start and complete. I usually check my mayonase jar to see what's in it for projects and sometime it does not have what I need/want inside.

It's a positive activity that you currently have rye grass to hold your soil in place. It will "fizzle out" just about the right time to plant Bermuda grass.

Hydromulch applications of grass seeds, wild flowers or other relatively large areas seed planted are usually best accomplished by contractors that perform this service. Measure the area(s) you wish to have planted and get this figure into how many 1,000 square feet are to be covered. Call a minimum of three landscape contractors that provide hydromulching services and ask these three questions: What do you charge per square foot to hydromulch Bermuda grass seed? Is there a minimum size or square footage you will require? Do you guarantee a stand of grass?

After you have secured these answers and numbers check you purse and decide to move forward with the hydromulch method or go another route.

Bermuda seed whether hydromulched or self planted is best done in May and June. If you decide to attempt the planting of Bermuda grass seed, 1 – 1 ½ pounds of hulled seed are needed per 1,000 square feet of area to be planted.

It would be best to lightly till the area(s) to be planted and rake them. After planting is complete keep the soil moist and new grass should be emerging in 10 – 14 days.

Dale, I have three peach trees on my property that are very old. They were here when I purchased the property. They are spread out and never been pruned.

They still bear fruit, but I am afraid to prune because of the age. What should I do? – B. N.

“Old” peach and other trees may be selectively pruned to increase production. This may be accomplished by pruning during the dormant season. As much as 40% of peach tree top growth is removed annually in commercial orchards.

If you decide to prune your trees for this season, do it now. If you plan to undertake this task let me suggest securing a pruning guide from your local County Agent’s office. You may also want to cruise aggie horticulture on-line for additional information.

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