

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

QA1111

This year we were unable to put plants in our house as we had it on the market and "show ready" and my plants suffered. My beautiful foxtail fern was covered up during the freezes but I might have left it out once w/o covering it up and it looks pitiful.

The once lush tails are drying out and I don't know what to do or if is coming back. I have fertilized it (water soluble plant food - plus gave it some diluted coffee grounds) and don't know if I should cut it back or not.

I am keeping an eye on it for the next week or so to see if it responds...I water it thoroughly 2-3 times a week now that it has been springlike.

Can you advise me on what else I can do? - L. R.

You could provide Willie Nelson's music, pinto beans and corn bread, chicken fried steak and iced tea but your plant will not respond.

Unfortunately, your plant is ... terminated. These interesting plants are tropical and not winter hardy in areas north of our Gulf Coast and Rio Grande Valley regions and will die if freezes reach these areas.

Secure additional plants now, enjoy them in the landscape or containers but make sure they are indoors or some other location to prevent freezing temperatures from terminating them also.

I live near Tyler and my yard is St. Augustine grass. I know you say to water only when needed, not on a schedule. My question is how do you know when it is needed?

Thanks. - P. M.

No matter where you live in Texas our lawns will normally do OK with an 1" to 1½" of water per week during the growing season. This includes rain and irrigation.

If St. Augustine grass shows signs of its' leaf blades rolling inward towards the midrib, it's color has changed from green to a shade or hue of grey-green or when walked on the grass does not "spring back" your grass needs a drink ... NOW. Either one of the symptoms I've described means your planting needs to be irrigated.

Several years ago I bought Oak Leaf Hydrangeas in Alabama and planted them here in Athens, Texas. They are doing well but it appears they flower from new growth. How should I prune them to maximize their flowering? - K. F.

That's along way to "tote" a plant. I do understand if this is a "special" plant to you. I've a planting of Bouncing Bet and Turk's cap Hibiscus I got from my Granny Miller a couple of decades ago and they remain special today in our home landscape.

Oak leaf hydrangea is available at retail nurseries in Texas.

Prune only as needed to shape your plant in question. Do maintain a 3 - 4" deep layer of organic mulch such as bark, shredded tree trimmings or similar materials around the plant's entire root system. Plants must have healthy roots to produce healthy growth and maintaining this cultural practice will aid in creating a favorable root environment. This cultural practice will normally aid an increase in bloom count.

Is there any type of cotton that can be grown in a residential situation in Texas? My grandparents were share croppers and I remember hoeing weeds in the cotton fields when I was little. I always loved the flowers on the cotton plants. I understand that it may not be okay to grow it in a cotton producing state unless one is authorized and following appropriate guidelines. Is this correct?

Thank you.- T. S.

I understand. Plants do bring about memories and most are warm. Cotton is in the same family as tropical and hardy hibiscus, okra, mallow and althea. I think all their blooms a enjoyable.

My Grandad Miller was a dry land farmer in south Brown County near the community of Indian Creek. Their plank home was about a mile from the Colorado river at a location known as Keys Crossing. Grandad said, "boy, don't plant your okra 'till cotton planting time when it's warm". How true this is.

Cotton and okra will germinate readily in warm soils but may decay in cool to cold soils. The month of May worked well for planting of both for my Grandad and will for you too.

I'm unaware of any restrictions for planting cotton seed as an ornamental in the landscape or for any other personal uses. Contact local or area farm seed and feed stores for seed availability and or cotton gins. Plant any variety you prefer.

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