

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

QA1059

I have some growths on the backsides of my oak trees leaves. They are light brown in color and fuzzy. What should I use to control them with? - V.H.

You have correctly identified the structure you have observed. They are growths caused by one or more of a group of insects called "gall forming insects". What happens is they secrete a substance that causes leaf cells to grow in odd shapes. These shapes are most often in some form of a "ball". They may or may not be fuzzy. Some are actually hard; none are known to be harmful to the trees they are in. This is a case of what I would call a "non problem". These may be found on several oak species in your area.

Should you wish to control them let me suggest you do this first. Contact your County Extension Agent's office and ask him or her to send you a "Fact Sheet" about "Gall forming Insects on Woody Plants". Read and study it then decide what course of action, if any you decide to take.

I have a Chinese evergreen that I really do like. At night it seems to "'cry". What causes this? I would like to know how to care for it properly. Can you help me? - J.E.B.

Aglaonemias or Chinese evergreens are absolutely wonderful low light plants! There is no better group of plants for an interior gardener to try.

The "crying" on your plant is called guttation. When there is not enough transpiration-taking place, which is water vapor loss through leaves, guttation may occur. This may be more noticeable in the early morning than at any other time. Plants that are well watered and in a relatively high humidity area are more likely to have guttation. It is not in most cases, something to worry about. Just make sure you do not overwater your aglaonemia.

Water your plant very thoroughly then allow the top two inches of the soil to dry before you water again. Do not place it near a full sunlight source. If you do it may burn like my fair skinned red headed wife, Judy. They both do well in filtered light. Fertilize when desired with a premium quality long lasting houseplant fertilizer according to label directions. Lastly, watch for mealy bugs and if you ever find a white cottony soft sticky critter on your plant you most likely have them. Treat as soon as possible and according to label directions with a product that is both labeled for use on "house plants" and mealy bugs.

A year ago we bought a Yaupon Holly, planted by the nursery, which assured us it was a female tree although it had no berries.

We used root stimulator and cared for it according to instructions. It did have blossoms this past spring but never formed more than five or six berries. Is there anything to feed it to encourage berries to form and remain on the tree? - B.K.

B.K., I think the main thing you can do is being patient. I know that may not be what you want to hear but it is true. Let me tell you why. It may take some female and it does sound like you have one, trees a long time it seems to produce a bumper crop of berries. Most of us purchase yaupon holly trees that are balled and burlaped which is also called B&B. When the trees are dug a rather large portion of the plants roots are cut off. Depending upon how much was removed at the time of digging and care it has received to this point contribute to how long it will be until it is well established. After the tree is well established and if proper care continues you should have berries. However, know this if there is not enough pollen available to pollinate the female flowers there will be no berries! Question, do you have a male tree on your property? If not, are there some near by?

It sounds like to me that your nursery person knew what he or she was talking about on knowing your tree was a female. I suggest you stick with the firm. This next season I think it is time you start using a premium quality long lasting (N) nitrogen fertilizer according to label directions. Keep your tree mulched with 3-4 inches or more of good organic mulch like pine bark mulch and water as needed.

By following my suggestions you should enjoy your yaupon loaded with berries in our beautiful state capital area in the near future. Good Luck!

I have been told this is a good time of the year to plant trees, is this correct? If so, why? What, if any, special things should one do if I were to plant a tree now? Which varieties would you recommend? - D.B.

Now is a great time of the year to plant trees. Actually there is none better because the air is cool while the soil is warm and moist. Another good reason is because there are some buys in trees available. Trees planted now will be much better rooted before summer than late spring planted trees. This is especially important when the hot dry days of our traditional July and August are with us.

There are no special requirements for planting trees now. Plant them as they should be planted any time of the year. Know this: most of us can handle a tree with a two inch or less diameter tree. A landscape contractor should really plant trees larger than 2" in diameter. If you do not know one look in your directory for a firm that is a member of TNLA the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association.

You can not go wrong by selecting trees from: Shumardi Red Oak, Bur Oak, Live Oak, Cedar Elm and Chinese Pistachio. For an expanded list of trees visit <http://dallas-tx.tamu.edu/>, click on Horticulture then Plants for Dallas County and select Deciduous or Evergreen trees. Note: This list of trees will apply in nearly all areas of Texas.

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