

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

QA1071

I have grass burs in my lawn and need to know what to do to get rid of them. Thanks.- L. D.

This is the time of year to make a second application of a grassy weed preventer according to label directions. Prior to purchasing make sure grass or sand burs is listed on the label. The first application is usually done around the end of Feb.

Secondly, have your soil tested and if low in (N) nitrogen apply according to the soil test. Mow frequently and water as needed to maintain healthy growth.

Mow frequently enough to remove 1/3 of the grass blade's height each time you mow. Water only when needed but do so deeply and thoroughly. This action will encourage deep rooting of your grass and it's Water Wise. To grow healthy plants including grass requires healthy roots. The best time of day to irrigate lawns or any other plants is early morning.

Healthy thick turf-grass will aid greatly in weed control including grass/sand burs.

I have some tomatoes that turn black on the bottom side. What is causing this and what should I do? - F. J.

This ailment is called ... blossom end rot and it's main cause is a lack of calcium uptake or absorption by the root system. Environmental as well as cultural factors may affect (Ca) calcium absorption.

One aid are a group of products often labeled as "blossom end rot stop" or similar labeling. They contain (Ca) that may be applied directly to the foliage of tomatoes for direct absorption. If your soil ph is out of balance (Ca) will not be available for utilization even if it's adequate in the soil. A soil test will identify ph, (Ca) content as well as major and minor plant nutrients in the soil and provide recommendations to correct potential needs.

You may receive a free Soil Test Kit by sending your request to Soil Test, Texas Cooperative Extension, 10056 Marsh Lane, Suite B-101, Dallas, TX 75229. If you wish ,address your request to my attention.

Wet and dry cycles also affect blossom end rot. While we can not control our rain patterns it is possible to install tomatoes in well amended soil that provides drainage yet holds sufficient moisture between irrigations. Mulching tomatoes' entire root system 3-4" deep with an organic mulch such as pine bark, hardwood bark or shredded tree trimmings will aid in healthy root development plus be Earth Kind and Water Wise because water is conserved and less fertilizer is needed.

Mulching as I have suggested plus the use of drip irrigation can reduce your water usage by 50% or more.

Reminder to all home tomato growers. The end of June is Fall tomato planting time in Texas.

When can I move my amaryllis bulbs? - G. K.

October.

Should my hydrangeas be pruned now? - H. Y.

The only pruning I might do is the removal of spent blooms. No major pruning of these Texas favorites should be done now.

If your beauties are not mulched 3-4" deep with an organic mulch please do so ... NOW. They love it and it's a prudent cultural activity that's easily accomplished.

Dale's note:

Summer water restriction are beginning now throughout Texas. It's time to be Water Wise and conserve all potable water reasonably possible. To maintain a landscape under these conditions: install locally well adapted Water Wise plants that aid the beauty of your property while requiring minimal irrigation once established, use drip irrigation, water early in the morning, do not irrigate on a preset schedule, do water only when needed and utilize organic mulches 3-4" deep throughout garden and landscape plantings. These combined activities can reduce total potable used in the landscape by 70%. That's quite a savings.

Dale Groom-CEA-Horticulture, Native Texan, Author, Columnist, Radio/TV Host is also known statewide as The Plant Groom(tm). Send your lawn, garden and landscape questions to Dale at dalegroom@mycvc.net

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