

What are bugs on crape myrtle?

I discovered white bugs on the branches of our crape myrtle. One branch is covered in them and has turned black. When I attempt to scrape the bugs off, it leaves a red streak. The bugs look like oval discs attached to the branches and trunk. What is this?

D.R., Dallas

This is a scale insect that has been attacking crape myrtles. Use my Sick Tree Treatment and spray with a mixture of Garrett Juice and orange oil or horticultural oil (follow label directions).

We use hay or straw mulch year-round, which encourages a pill bug population. These bugs destroy many transplants and emerging plants such as beans. We have tried diatomaceous earth, coffee grounds, garlic-pepper spray, Garrett Juice, etc. Nothing seems to work.

C.C., Dallas

A new organic commercial product is formulated for snails, slugs, pill bugs and centipedes. It is the Sluggo product but with spinosad added. I have tried a sample, and it works well.

Cottony cushion scale has been growing on my pittosporum plants for 1 1/2 years. I thought I got rid of these insects by spraying dormant oil during the winter, but they are back. I've been reading that the vedalia beetle is the best defense.

B.T., Highland

Beneficial insects that target specific pest insects may work, and they often are the best option because good insects won't be hurt.

If that fails, my formula for fire-ant mound drench, used as a spray, should kill the cottony cushion scale insects. (See Resources to obtain detailed instructions.)

For long-term control, try to figure out why your shrubs are in stress. They would not have

ORGANIC ANSWERS



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this pest if they were healthy. Causes of stress could include too much or too little water, poor drainage, compacted soil or the use of high-nitrogen fertilizers.

I have an 18-year-old elm tree in the front yard. Representatives of three out of six foundation companies claim the tree is causing my foundation problems. The foundation guys want to install a root barrier because they claim the tree is pulling water out of the soil beneath my house, causing the foundation to sink in one spot.

M.D., Dallas

In most cases, I don't get very concerned about trees causing foundation problems. Most foundation problems are caused by poor foundation construction and poor drainage. The foundation beam usually serves as an effective root barrier even when a tree is close to the foundation.

If the theory is correct that tree roots dip under foundation beams, grow beneath the house and cause damage by sucking out the moisture, a major concession would have to be made. No trees could be allowed on residential property because tree roots extend three to five times the width of a tree's drip line.

There are literally millions of trees on residential property where no foundation damage is occurring. If the theory that root barriers are needed is correct, there would be a need for a lot of

them. If you decide to use a root barrier just to be safe, make sure the barrier is solid. Porous barriers allow moisture to be pulled through and cannot maintain a moisture level. I usually don't recommend root barriers or removing trees.

Two years ago, we purchased 1.2 acres in a suburban area. My backyard neighbor originally owned more than 10 acres, including my property. He is an old-school farmer who has used many chemicals over the past 45 years. He has treated for termites and fire ants, and he bordered the garden area (about 1/4 acre) with railroad ties. I plan to put eight chickens into a mobile chicken pen in that part of the yard as soon as they hatch and get big enough. Should I remove the railroad ties since the chemicals in them are a source of contamination? And what should I do to restore the soil's health? Should I plant vegetables? Or should I treat the area for a year and plant next year?

S.K., Fort Worth

Remove the railroad ties, and then decontaminate the site. First, apply activated charcoal on top of the soil at a rate of 100 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Follow that with zeolite at 80 pounds per 1,000 square feet, and then apply Garrett Juice at about 2 gallons per 1,000 square feet. After that, follow my Basic Organic Program, but double the rate of dry molasses. (See Resources to obtain instructions.)

RESOURCES

ONLINE: www.dirtdoctor.com for free organic-program handouts

RADIO: KSKY-AM (660), Saturday 11 a.m.-noon and Sunday 8-11 a.m. www.ksky.com.

MAIL: P.O. Box 140650, Dallas, TX 75214

CHORES

Fix bare spots under trees with shade lovers

By RICK ROSEN
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Many homeowners are surprised when they look down at their St. Augustine or Bermuda grass to find bare spots where there used to be turf.

In many cases, they would do better to look up. Those trees they planted as saplings have grown, and the dense shade they provide is depriving the grass of what it needs: sunlight.

Turf simply won't grow well in dense shade. Even the most shade-tolerant grass for our area, St. Augustine, can't thrive in the shadows of trees.

Evergreen trees such as live oaks, magnolias, tall hollies and pines cast heavy shade. Even deciduous trees with large leaves or with thick canopies, such as some oaks, blot out the sunlight.

As a first step to determining whether shade is the problem with your grass, note the amount of shade the grass gets and where the shade falls at various times of the day. Note whether the shade is solid or filtered.

Dr. Jim McAfee, Texas Cooperative Extension turf grass specialist, says that in general, if turf gets fewer than 3 or 4 hours of direct sunlight (and not filtered light) per day, it will be tough to grow turf successfully.

"While some of the turf grasses such as St. Augustine grass and some of the zoysia grasses may survive in less light than this, they will be a weak, thin stand of grass that is subject to weed invasion and environmental stress problems, such as extreme heat and drought conditions and freezing temperatures," he says.

If shade is the problem, you have options. Some people simply plant new sod under their trees every few years. Though expensive, this is useful if your children play on the lawn or you walk on it a lot.

Alternatively, you can spread mulch, rocks, pavers or some other hard material in an attractive pattern over the bare areas.

Another option is ground covers that thrive in the shade. Though few plants can handle much foot traffic, quite a few do well in shade.

Some ground covers take longer to establish than others, so take pains to match the plant to the amount of shade you have. As with turf, it's



FILE/Staff

Liriope is a shade-loving ground cover that works well under trees.

best to plant ground covers now, before it gets too hot, or in the fall, so that the plants won't be stressed by heat their first year.

Before you plant, improve the soil by adding in compost or other amendments. That will ensure that your new plants have the best chance to succeed.

SHADE-LOVING GROUND COVERS

- **ajuga** (*Ajuga reptans*): purplish evergreen foliage
- **horseherb** (*Calyptocarpus vialis*): a Texas native with light-green foliage and tiny yellow flowers that looks especially good paired with wood violets (*Viola sp.*)
- **Boston ivy** (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*)
- **English ivy** (*Hedera helix*)
- **liriope** (*Liriope muscari*), or lilyturf or monkey grass
- **mondo grass** (*Ophiopogon japonicus*)
- **vinca**, or periwinkle (*Vinca major*, a big-leafed plant, or *Vinca minor*, which has smaller leaves)
- **spurge** (*Pachysandra terminalis*)
- **Asian jasmine**
- **ferns**
- **hostas**
- **elephant ears**

PASS IT ON

Pass It On is a free service for readers who want to donate unwanted items. To submit, see Contact Us on Page 2. Offerings are accepted up to one week before publication. Requests for items are not accepted.

OFFERINGS

Two whirlpool bathtubs. Good condition. Call after 7 a.m. Jill, Dallas, 214-353-0455.
OKI laser color printer C5100. Gently used. Also, three new color cartridges. Call after 9 a.m. Sherrill, Frisco, 972-370-9605.

FOR A NONPROFIT

Two wood desks. One computer desk, one office desk. Call after 7 a.m. Jill, Dallas, 214-353-0455.

Sigrid Mureen

THE WEEK

TUESDAY

HEALTHY LIVING

AT-HOME ATHLETES:

Can't make it to the gym? These trainers will come to you

WEDNESDAY

TASTE

AUTHENTIC FAJITAS:

Get out the grill and the guacamole for Memorial Day

NEXT WEEK

HOME

OUTDOOR LIVING:

We've got what you need to bring summer to your space

Shopping the Town

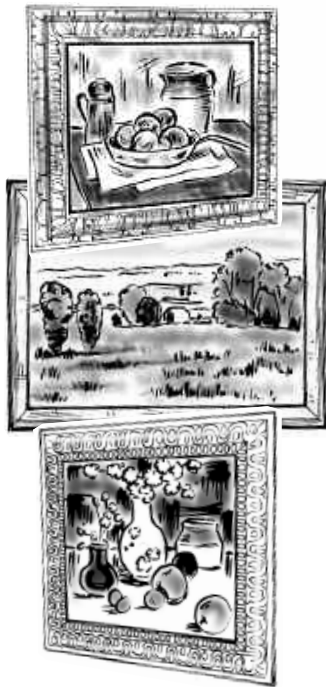


Anniversary sale

Don't miss the last two days of 25% off everything at Rutherford's in celebration of its 18th anniversary. Rutherford's, 5417 Lovers Lane, 214-357-0888.

Dallas Frame by Max & Image Archives is tucked in the back corner of Forestwood Antique Mall. The business specializes in custom framing, mirrors, historical photos and art. Come visit its newly expanded space showcasing an extensive moulding selection and framed works. As a special promotion, poster framing (up to 24 X 36 images), is offered for \$89. To reach the frame shop, call 972-503-2488. Forestwood Antique Mall, 5333 Forest Lane, Dallas. Open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday. 972-661-0001.

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- Passion Vine
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- Crossvine
- Jasmine

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May 19th 10:30am
Grooming Daylilies
Keep your Daylilies healthy and beautiful!

May 19th 1:30
Benefits of Bees
Meet the Bee Keepers!

Grow blooming vines on Iron Trellises. Lovely selection in stock!

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