

Get rid of the willows

I have three Austree hybrid willows that are 9 years old and 40 to 50 feet tall.

These trees are very high-maintenance, and the root system is approaching the sidewalk, driveway and house. Roots also are growing on top of the ground.

Grass does not grow well under them, but they provide minimal shade. Should they go?

R.B., Flower Mound

Yes, they are horrible trees. That's why I recommend avoiding them.

Cut your losses and cut them down. I doubt they would even make good firewood.

If you want willows, plant weeping willows.

Better choices for fairly fast-growing trees include bur oak, Mexican sycamore, Texas red oak, dawn redwood and Montezuma cypress.

Is it OK to add deer droppings to compost bins? We have an exotic

ORGANIC ANSWERS



HOWARD GARRETT
home@dallasnews.com

species on our property — domesticated red deer that are genetically a type of European elk.

I need to add nitrogen to the compost, and this seems like a potential source. **R.B., Celina**

The manure should not be a problem. Animal manure can go into compost piles unless the animals are being fed something strange and toxic.

It soon will be time for my fruit trees to bloom. I have two 'Moonglow' pears that suffered from fire blight last year. I bought copper soap fungicide

for use during dormancy. The directions for this spray indicate that it also can be used on blossoms. Is that a good idea?

R.S., Mount Pleasant

I'm not a fan of copper products.

Try this: Spray 3 percent hydrogen peroxide now and again when the trees are in bloom. Hydrogen peroxide is very effective on other bacterial diseases and should work in this case. Let me know how it turns out.

Fire blight is a bacterial disease that kills blossoms, shoots, limbs and sometimes entire apple and pear trees. It also attacks rosebushes.

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

Get the upper hand on weeds

By RICK ROSEN
Staff Writer
rrosen@dallasnews.com

You can't see them, but weeds are ready to sprout in your lawn. Now, before warm weather arrives, is the time to attack them.

Pre-emergent herbicides, or the organic alternative, corn gluten meal, can kill annual spring and summer grass-type weeds such as crab grass, goosegrass and grassburs. The products are not effective after mid-March, when warm weather lets weed seeds gain the upper hand. And they don't work on perennial weeds (though there are plenty of chemical herbicides that do).

Rohde's Nursery and Nature Store, which sells weed-control services, has used corn gluten meal on lawns for years. Owner Gregory Rohde recommends the following general program:

■ Apply corn gluten meal at a rate of 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet of turf.

■ Water it in thoroughly.

■ If it's a bad case of weeds and you can beat the mid-March deadline, apply again four to five weeks later at a rate of 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet. That way, you catch seeds at different stages of development.

His service uses powdered corn gluten meal powder rather than granular, because "the granular takes longer to break down than seeds [do] to germinate," he says.

There are many chemical pre-emergent

herbicides on the market. Some are Amaze, XL, Balan, Betasan and Greenlight Crab Grass Killer. They all have the goal of preventing weed seeds from germinating. Read the labels carefully: Some products are for Bermuda grass lawns, some for St. Augustine and so forth.

Dr. Jim McAfee, Texas A&M University associate professor and extension specialist in turfgrass management, says corn gluten meal has not proved as effective as the chemical pre-emergents.

However, for organic gardeners, it is an option, he says.

Some additional tips from Mr. Rohde and from Texas Cooperative Extension for fighting weeds:

■ In lawns with a heavy weed problem, Rohde's service often aerates the soil, basically punching holes in the lawn, to encourage healthy turf growth. Compost is then laid over the soil.

■ Mr. Rohde also recommends using a grass catcher when you mow until the weeds stop producing flowers.

■ Cooperative Extension suggests mowing regularly, about once a week, to prevent weed seed heads from developing.

You don't have to use pre-emergents to be free of weeds. The best strategy is to encourage strong, healthy turf. A lawn full of grass crowds out weeds.

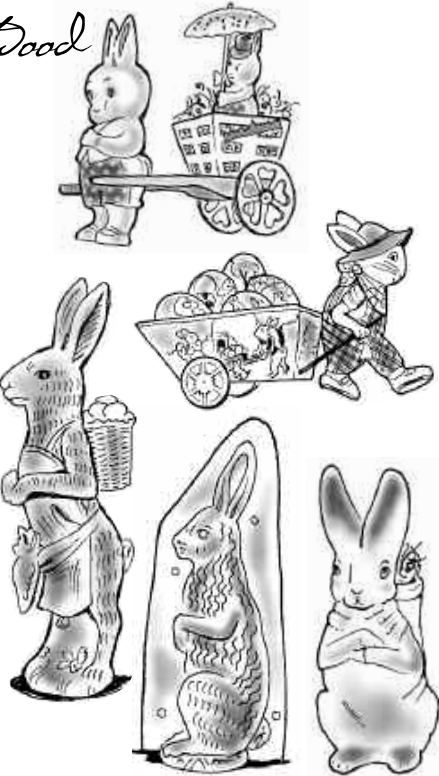
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Shopping the Town



Hop to Forestwood

To help create an Easter to remember, head to Bill Voinov's shop at Forestwood Antique Mall. Bill has a terrific collection of vintage Easter items, including colorful 1950s toys that will send the message that spring is right around the corner. The collection also includes antique chocolate molds, papier-mache, pressed cardboard ornaments from Germany and much more. **Forestwood Antique Mall**, 5333 Forest Lane, Dallas. Open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily and from noon to 6 p.m. on Sunday. 972-661-0001.



Spring flowers

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Warehouse liquidation sale



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THIS WEEK

TUESDAY

HEALTHY LIVING

ROAD TO RECOVERY: A new exhibit at the Women's Museum explores the secret struggles of people with eating disorders

WEDNESDAY

TASTE

PANTRY PASTA: New ideas for busy nights

NEXT WEEK

HOME

GREEN DAY:

The springy color perks up furnishings and accessories

TELL US

We're compiling a list of spring plant sales produced by local garden clubs and nonprofit public gardens. If your organization has an upcoming event where plants will be for sale, please send us the details by March 23. Fax 214-977-8321 or e-mail home@dallasnews.com.

ON DALLASNEWS.COM

RAINWATER HARVESTING

This Old House on PBS continues coverage of an all-out green remodeling in Austin. Next up: the home's innovative rainwater harvesting system (below). Find a link to the show, plus our story and photos about the project.

DallasNews.com/Extra



FASHION ALERT

The extravaganza dubbed **Fashion at the Park** wraps up at NorthPark today and Saturday. Get all the news from the runways, parties, front rows and backstage.

DallasNews.com/Style

HOME

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Features Editor: Cathy Barber

Home Editor: Mariana Greene

CONTACT US

Phone: 214-977-8834

E-mail: home@dallasnews.com

Mail: P.O. Box 655237 Dallas, TX 75265

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