

Cutting roots probably hurt your tree

About four years ago, we hired an arborist to construct a stone tree-surround around a mature maple tree. In order to place the stones while building it, he did extensive chopping on the tree's roots. He assured us that this would not damage the tree. Before construction, the tree always leafed out well in the spring. For the past four years, however, it has been puny and is thinly leafed. Other maples in the area are thick with foliage, but ours is a shadow of its former self. What do you think?

A.D., Dallas

You need a different arborist. Cutting the roots hurt the tree. I can give you more advice if you send photos, but you definitely need to follow my Sick Tree Treatment. It is explained on my Web site. (See Resources.)

If soil was added during this project, it should be removed because it would be as damaging to the tree as cutting the roots.

I'd like your opinion of this method for getting rid of mole crickets: Pour a mixture of dishwashing liquid and water over the lawn. Within seconds, the crickets will come out of the ground.

M.B., Dallas

That's not a bad idea for a one-time treatment, but applying soap or detergent on a regular basis will hurt beneficial microbes in the soil.

When the crickets are on the surface, they can be killed with a spray of orange oil.

ORGANIC ANSWERS



HOWARD GARRETT
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When I find a product with the Organic Materials Review Institute symbol on it, is that assurance of a good product for my garden?

R.B., Tyler

Products with the OMRI seal usually are good products and are acceptable for an organic program.

I also have a list of good organic products on my Web site under the Research Center section.

We recently lost one Scottish terrier to bladder cancer, and our other Scottie has just been diagnosed with cancer. I did research online and discovered that Scotties genetically are at high risk for bladder cancer, and they are seven times more likely to develop it if they are exposed to pesticides. We are about to buy a new house, and we look forward to getting another dog. We also have a 19-month-old child. How can I remove chemicals from the yard and soil?

K.W., Dallas

There are basically two ways to go.

One way is to go cold turkey. Quit using chemicals and begin an organic program. Apply zeolite at a rate of 50 pounds per 1,000 square feet, then add dry molasses at 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet and then make the year's first organic fertilizer application, unless you have already done that. The second major annual feeding will be in early June; the third and last is in the fall. Beneficial microbes from the organic amendments will slowly neutralize toxic chemicals in the soil.

The other approach is to apply an activated carbon product called Gro-Safe, which is made by Norit. This fine-textured material is mixed with water and sprayed. It immediately ties up toxins. Then the organic amendments described above should be applied.

Gro-Safe can be difficult for consumers to buy, but some organic lawn contractors apply the product, which is a good idea because it is messy.

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



FILE 1997/Staff

Wisteria will quickly cover an arbor, fence or outbuilding. If not pruned annually, it can become invasive.

Hanging on: what vines love to cling to

By RICK ROSEN
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Vines grow quickly. Some will grow quickly on almost anything. But others need help growing in the direction you want them to grow.

From *1,000 Gardening Questions & Answers* (Workman Publishing, \$19.95 paperback): "Most vines will climb the comparatively smooth bamboo stakes sold in garden centers. But they will be happier — and more inclined to go straight up — if you provide twigs with the bark on, rough sisal twine and/or something else with texture."

Before you can determine the best way to support your vine, you need to know what type of climber it is. There are three main types: tendril-climbers, twiners or clingers. Tendrils and twiners are the most common.

The tendril-climbers send out filaments that wrap around objects they contact. The tendrils can't wrap around thick supports, such as fence posts. Tack up wire, twine or even thin wood stakes, and the vine will climb them.

Twiners don't send out shoots; they simply wrap themselves around supports. They are excellent on wire, mailboxes, trellises, lattice and arbors. Generally, they are heavier than tendril-climbers, so the support structures need to be stronger. Like the tendril-climbers, you have to have a support of some kind to grow a twiner horizontally. Lattices, wire mesh and nets will work.

Clinging vines essentially glue themselves to surfaces. They send out aerial rootlets, called holdfasts. Any rough-textured surface will do: Walls, trees and fences are conquered with ease. Examples are Boston or English ivy. They are very good at covering broad expanses, but watch out — they also can loosen the mortar on brick walls. They also can damage the wood on frame buildings.

Clingers only start clinging from new growth. *1,000 Gardening Questions & Answers* has some interesting suggestions

for holding up the vines until they start clinging: The book suggests bubble-gum, masonry staples (don't crush the stems), soft putty, glued ceramic disks with bendable wire holders (sold at garden centers), even thumbtacks on a wooden fence ("Stagger them at 6-inch intervals along either side of the stem.")

1,000 Gardening Questions and *The Lone Star Gardener's Book of Lists* (Taylor Publishing, \$17.95 paperback) specify some common vines and the type of climber they are:

Tendrils: Cat's-claw vine (*Macfadyena unguis-cati*), passion vine (*Passiflora spp.*), grapes, cross vine (*Bignonia capreolata*), autumn clematis (*Clematis paniculata*), scarlet clematis (*Clematis texensis*), cup-and-saucer vine (*Cobaea scandens*), sweet pea (*Lathyrus odoratus*).

Twiners: Mandevilla (*Mandevilla splendens*), Confederate jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*), bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea spp.*), morning glory (*Ipomoea spp.*), moonflower (*Ipomoea alba*), wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), cypress vine (*Quamoclit pinnata*), hyacinth bean (*Dolichos lablab*), coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), evergreen smilax (*Smilax lanceolata*), silver lace vine (*Polygonum aubertii*), Henry clematis (*Clematis henryi*), Armand clematis (*Clematis armandii*), hybrid clematis (*Clematis x hybrida*).

Clingers: English ivy (*Hedera helix*), climbing fig (*Ficus pumila*), Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*), trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*), Persian ivy (*Hedera colchica*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*).

DigitalEXTRA

Link: Find out how and where to plant vines from the Aggie Horticulture Department. Get the link at DallasNews.com/Extra.

HOME

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THE WEEK

TUESDAY

HEALTHY LIVING

HEALTHY VIRTUES: Learn the power of flexibility for a stronger mind and body.

WEDNESDAY

TASTE

THAI TOAST: Our wine panel chooses wines to go with Thai takeout.

NEXT WEEK

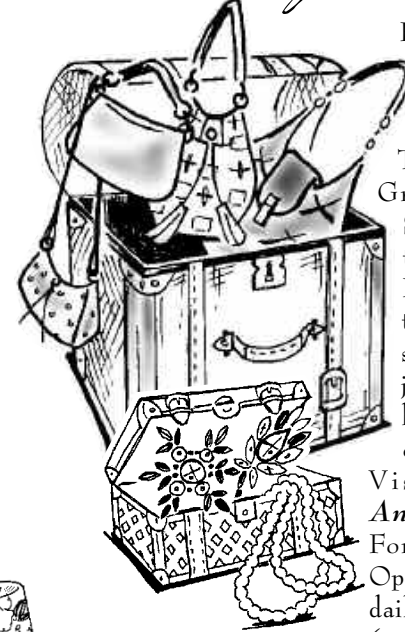
HOME

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