

CHORES

WRONG: This cedar elm's root flare has been buried under layers of soil, the result of years of planting seasonal annuals around the trunk. The tree, stunted and sickly, is scheduled for removal.



CORRECT: The root flare of a cedar elm 10 feet away, planted at the same time as its neighbor, is exposed, and the tree is healthy.



Photos by NATALIE CAUDILL/Staff Photographer

Know where your root flare is?

By RICK ROSEN
Staff Writer

Besides being a good time to plant or transplant trees, winter is the time to check the root system of trees on your property.

The most common mistake made in planting trees is covering the root flare — where the trunk transitions laterally into root tissue — with soil. If a tree trunk looks like a telephone pole stuck in the ground, the tree probably has been planted too deeply. If the flare is covered with dirt or mulch, the tree can suffer or die.

Arborist Tyson Woods of Root Flare Services, Dallas (www.rootflare.com; 214-350-6363), says trees with root-flare problems can have these symptoms:

- A thinning canopy
- Smaller leaves than normal
- Susceptibility to disease
- Dieback at tips of branches or abnormal leaf color

- Stunting
- Failure to thrive

The treatment: Remove the soil or mulch covering the flare. Many arborists use a compressed-air tool to blast away the soil without hurting the roots. This is usually an expensive undertaking, but so is replacing a large tree. You can dig yourself, but don't damage the roots.

Uncovering the root flare ensures that the trunk's bark is not covered with any material that can keep it damp, causing rot.

Pull up grass that covers the flare and add mulch in a doughnut pattern, leaving a bare circle around the exposed flare. The mulch feeds the tree as it decomposes and deters grass from overtaking the flare. Lawnmowers rrammed into tree trunks or run over the root flare is the cause of most injuries, and the mulch circle helps prevent that damage.

E-mail rosen@dallasnews.com

My pool's not a birdbath!

We built a pool last year with a beach entry. Now, we have about a hundred birds a day in the pool. Needless to say, the bird droppings are a mess.

We've tried to scare the birds away with a plastic owl, a scarecrow and aluminum foil plates hanging on a string. Nothing has worked. How would you suggest getting rid of these birds?

V.M., Plano

Try spraying the area with orange oil and water. Use 2 ounces of orange oil per gallon of water. If any of the spray hits the birds, word will spread throughout the bird world and the problem should be solved.

What is the difference between a clingstone and a freestone peach?

R.P., Granbury

In freestone peaches, the fruit easily separates from the seed.

In clingstone peaches, the fruit is firmly attached to the seed.

Clingstone peaches are the first peaches to mature in the summer and are good choices for eating fresh, freezing, cooking or drying because they retain their shape.

Freestone peaches ripen later and taste great eaten fresh. Cooks like them because they are easy to slice.

There is basically no taste dif-

ORGANIC ANSWERS



HOWARD GARRETT

ference.

I need to get rid of roaches and ants in the kitchen. I heard you say something on the radio about mixing half sugar and half detergent.

G.W., Garland

To control roaches, mix equal parts of sugar and Arm & Hammer powdered laundry detergent. Adding a pinch of boric acid makes this bait even more effective. Don't use too much boric acid or the roaches will not eat the bait.

I have just planted 'Empire' zoysia grass. How should I fertilize it and when? And what do you recommend for weed control?

S.T., Dallas

Zoysia grass requires the same maintenance as Bermuda grass, but it needs less mowing and edging. Follow the basic organic program on my Web site.

It is important to know that zoysia grasses do not tolerate heavy foot traffic. Compaction weakens or kills the grass, and it doesn't repair fast enough to keep weeds from invading.

Other weed-control measures include spring and fall applications of corn gluten meal and spot-spraying occasional weeds with vinegar-based herbicides.

We have three small dogs and recently have seen two cats marking their territory in our yard. Is there anything that I can put on the entire yard that will remove the cat urine smell? Some days, the odor is overwhelming.

D.M., Bedford

Activated charcoal products applied to the soil should help, as would zeolite applications. Adding orange oil to foliar sprays at a rate of 1 to 2 ounces per gallon also should help.

RESOURCES

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

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

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

GARDENING

FLOWER SHOW: "Bright Expectations" will be presented by the Dallas Flower Show Judges, Founders Group. 1-4:30 p.m. Monday, Rosine Hall, Trammell Crow Visitor Education Pavilion, The Dallas Arboretum, 8525 Garland Road. Free with admission. 972-727-6496.

ARLINGTON HOUSE AND GARDEN SHOW: Features gardening and design seminars and appearances by Paul James of HGTV's Gardening by the Yard and Brian Santos (a.k.a. the Wall Wizard). Also, displays on gardening, landscaping and home products. 2-7 p.m. today, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m.-5

CALENDAR

p.m. Sunday. Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way, Arlington. \$7.50, children younger than 17 free. 1-877-663-6186 or 817-459-5030. www.showtechnology.com.

BEEKEEPING CLASS: Five-session course covers basic beekeeping. Build your own equipment and learn to produce honey. Features lectures and hands-on experience. 8 a.m.-noon Jan. 27, Feb. 3, March 3, April 21 and May 5. Limited to 25 students. Sabine Creek Honey Farm, 22326 County Road 638, Josephine. \$135, additional family members \$85; includes a handbook and a one-year membership in the Collin County Hobby Beekeepers Association. Preregistration required. 972-843-8084.

HOME

DALLAS HOMESHOW: Latest ideas in home improvement, landscaping and storage solutions. Exhibits, products,

services and demonstrations, including Douglas DeBoe of Artistic Finishes with ideas for faux finishes, and Billie Casimatis of North Texas Waterscapes discussing ponds and other water features. 2-8 p.m. today, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday. Dallas Convention Center, 650 S. Griffin St. \$8, children younger than 13 free, seniors \$6 today only. Coupons for \$1 off available at Tom Thumb stores and at www.texashomeandgarden.com. 1-800-654-1480.

THE FOUR SEASONS IN PAINTINGS AND FLOWERS: Exhibit features paintings and artwork from the Association of Oriental Arts paired with arrangements by Dallas chapter of Sogetsu and the Dallas and Fort Worth chapters of Ikebana International. Hours: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and 1-5 p.m. Sunday through Jan. 28. Main Gallery, Irving Arts Center, 3333 N. MacArthur Blvd., Irving. Free. 972-252-7558.

Sigrid Murene

THE WEEK

TUESDAY

HEALTHY LIVING

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMP: A Plano gym heats things up with "Suffer on Saturday" workouts

WEDNESDAY

TASTE

TAKE A RIBBING:

Short ribs are showing up on menus all over town

NEXT WEEK

HOME

SUCCULENTS: Learn the pros' secrets to luscious displays

ON DALLASNEWS.COM

Check out video of the Rachael Ray challenge at DallasNews.com/Food

PLUS: Archive of all your favorite columnists.

WHERE ARE THE COMICS?

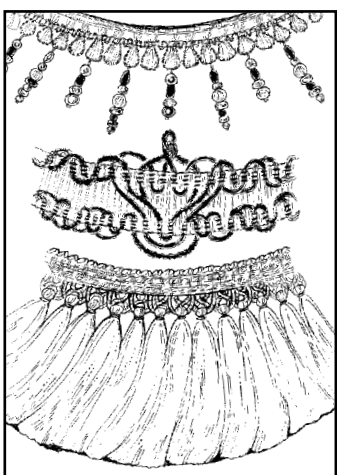
Your favorite comics — bigger! — and puzzles are now in their own section, **Comics & Puzzles**, Monday through Saturday in Section H.

Shopping the Town

Everything's on sale



Receive blow-out prices on all antiques and in stock custom designed pieces at Jayroe's. The tables you see are all custom built and available for purchase. If you can't find the right color, size or style, just ask us to search our huge inventory or ask Jeff to build it! Jayroe's Antiques & Customer Design Furniture is in the back portion of Forestwood Antique Mall, 5333 Forest Lane in Dallas, 972-960-8516. Open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily and noon to 6 p.m. on Sunday.



Antique trims - new fabric

Use our vintage and antique trims to transform a tapestry or pillow into a unique treasure. Also, don't miss the chance to look over our exciting new fabrics for spring — blue and white, apple green, coral, aqua, golden beige and teal — they're just right for table skirts, draperies, panels and bedspreads, and will freshen your home. *Rutherford's*, 5417 West Lovers Lane, Dallas, 214-357-0888.

Shopping the Town runs Fridays in House & Garden.

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HOME

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