

The week ahead

TUESDAY
HEALTHY LIVING

THE DAY-AFTER LETDOWN:
The big event is over; how do you cope?

WEDNESDAY
TASTE

DINERS' BAD HABITS:
Restaurant managers and waitstaff dish about customers

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SAVING THE RAIN:
Homeowners capture precipitation in barrels to keep landscapes healthy

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HOME

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Use orange oil to drive off toads

Is there anything that can keep toads out of my yard? I have many small and large toads that I would like to eliminate. My dog seems to enjoy killing them by biting and tossing them around. The dog is then dirty and must be cleaned.

G.G., Denton

Toads are very beneficial to the garden environment and should be protected. If you must run them off, they don't like to be sprayed with orange oil. That's why I don't recommend that orange oil be sprayed for insect pests on a regular basis. But try to learn to live with the toads.

I have been trying to expose the root flares on two trees. I began scooping dirt from an area of about 2 feet in diameter around the trunk of each tree. I found the root flares, but now I have a rather deep hole around the base of each tree. Should I leave the holes open, or can I fill them with bark mulch?

J.L. Rowlett

It may look a little odd for a while, but the best tactic is to leave the holes open. The root flares need to be exposed to air; they eventually will fill the holes.

My two Confederate roses

ORGANIC ANSWERS



HOWARD GARRETT
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bloomed the first year after I planted them. The second and third years, there was a hole in every bud and not one bloom. I sprayed the bushes the third year. Neither bush seems to have survived this past winter. How should I take care of the bushes, and what might be destroying the buds?

J.J., Dallas

Confederate rose is one of the names for hardy hibiscus (*Hibiscus mutabilis*). It is a shrubby, old-fashioned Southern perennial sometimes also called giant rose mallow.

Try applying beneficial nematodes to the soil, and spray the bushes with garlic tea or garlic-pepper tea. If they don't survive, replant in the spring and consider these plants to be

annuals in your yard.

I have been researching pill bugs online because of damage to plants that I assumed was caused by an overabundance of these insects. However, from what I read, it seems that they are basically beneficial to the garden soil. If this is true, what is damaging my plants? Some plants look as if the leaves have been stripped from the stems. There are no other pests visible. Should I use diatomaceous earth?

L.N., McKinney

Pill bugs feed primarily on dead and decaying organic matter, but they also eat foliage, especially when the pill bug population is large. Natural tools that work well to repel them include coffee grounds, lava sand, decomposed granite and expanded shale.

Slugs and snails also may be part of your problem. The commercial product Sluggo Plus works pretty well to kill them. Diatomaceous earth doesn't work well in moist situations.

RESOURCES

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

CHORES



Photos by NATALIE CAUDILL/Staff Photographer

Homeowners in Far North Dallas and Richardson report crape myrtles are infested with a sap-sucking pest identified as scale.

Scale moves to crapes

By RICK ROSEN
Staff Writer
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Sap-sucking insects called scale have found a new victim: crape myrtle trees.

Scale are tiny insects that look like bumps on leaves or branches of shrubs and trees. Some species have a white, cottony appearance; others have hard, waxy, dark bodies. As adults, they park on plants and don't move. Large groups can suck the life from trees or shrubs.

Texas Cooperative Extension horticulturist Dale Groom says the species of scale showing up now on crape myrtles had been attacking azaleas. Not until this year has Extension received calls about scale on crape myrtles. Judging from the calls, the infestation is concentrated in Far North Dallas and Richardson.

Research is under way into dealing with the insects. For now, Mr. Groom recommends spraying the leaves, branches and trunk with summer-weight horticultural oil. A few weeks after spraying, pry off one of the hard shells and make sure it has dried. That means the treatment worked.

You also can use a systemic product labeled for scale that is watered into the soil.

Later in the year, when the trees are dormant, apply dormant oil. Garden centers and nurseries carry various brands, which will be labeled for scale. Be sure to follow label directions, Mr. Groom urges.

Organic-gardening expert Howard Garrett, on dirtdoctor.com, also recommends either horticultural oil or a mixture of Garrett Juice and orange oil.



If plants in your landscape have scale, don't ignore it. Horticultural oil and organic methods are among the remedies.

(Garrett Juice consists of 1 cup of manure-based compost tea, 1 ounce of molasses, one ounce of natural apple cider vinegar and 1 ounce of liquid seaweed.)

First, though, you should use his "sick tree treatment," which basically involves these steps: Remove any excess soil from above the root ball, because many trees are planted too deeply, with soil covering the root flare; aerate the root zone with a core aerator; apply organic amendments; spray the trees and roots with Garrett Juice or compost tea; eliminate use of high-nitrogen fertilizers.

Scale is a sign that your plant is stressed, writes Mr. Garrett: "The real problem? Plants planted too low, too much water, too little water, too much fertilizer, wrong kind of fertilizer, toxic chemicals in the soil, too much shade, circling or girdling root system or something else. Whether you're using toxic chemicals or organic techniques, there's something about the situation that the plants don't like."

After scale insects are killed, they leave a soot-like substance on leaves. This wears off over time.

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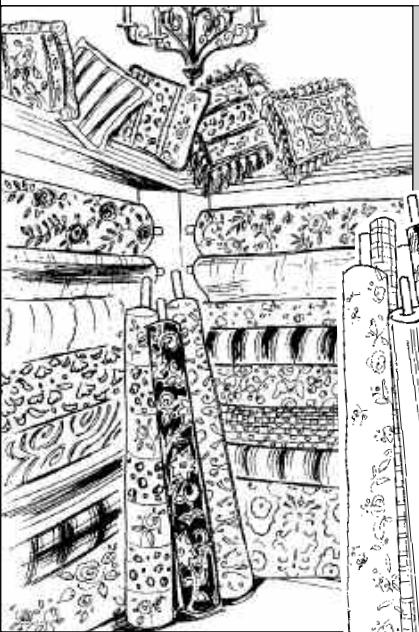
Wooden desk (5 feet by 3 feet). Wooden bookcase (6 feet tall, 7 feet wide, all one piece, three sections). You haul. Call after 8 a.m. Joan, Dallas, 214-891-0450.

Misty Bailey
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Shopping the town

Collectibles at Jean's Antiques

Jean's Antiques features a wonderful collection of Royal Doulton figurines and hard-to-find Hummel figurines. While browsing in Jean's shop, you also will find a nice selection of English antiques and many other collectibles. The shop is located inside **Forestwood Antique Mall**, 5333 Forest Lane, Dallas. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., 972-661-0001.



Warehouse Sale

Round up the gals this week and head for Rutherford's Warehouse Blowout Sale! For three days only, all fabrics will be priced at \$8 a yard and under. Select trims will be priced at just \$3 per yard and all accessories will be 75% off! Stop in from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, July 12-14, and let us show you around. There are incredible bargains to be had! **Rutherford's**, 7411 Hines Place, No. 209, Dallas. 214-459-0003 or 214-357-0888. www.rutherforddesign.com.



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