



Prime's Clippings

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Rainy Relief!

Finally, we have enjoyed a couple days of heavy rains to begin May after what has been an unusually dry and predominately hot start to spring. We haven't erased the rainfall deficit from the last several months, but we have certainly made a dent in it. As usual though, we got alot of rain in a short period of time, so much of it ran off rather than soaking in. May is historically our wettest month so we may get caught up if weather patterns hold true.

Great news for our lawns and our pocket-books! Keep your sprinklers off when you are getting a good rain every 7- 10 days, but you should still keep an eye on any new plants. A few unseasonably hot days can wilt newly planted flowers even if they got a good soaking rain and we already hit the 90s several times in April. Although it is pleasant now, if there is one certainty about Texas weather it is the unpredictable swings in temperatures and rainfall.



May is for Maintenance

The key word for May is maintenance! This is probably the hardest time of the year to try and keep up with everything. With the onset of rains and warmer temperatures all our plants will be growing fast. That means weeds in the beds seem to be in a race to see who can reach the roof first. It seems like one little weed will grow into a monster in just a week or so. Shrubs too are flushing out and put on some of their heaviest growth of the year during the next 2 months. Our lawns should now be mowed weekly for the rest of the growing season. *Remember, mowing too infrequently stresses the grass and can contribute to disease and weed problems.*

Maintenance also means keeping up with insects and diseases. Most of our insect pests and disease organisms multiply rapidly in moist warm weather, so a good gardener needs to watch for aphids, mealy bugs, cut-

worms, brown patch fungus, and any number of similar problem makers that can quickly wreck havoc on your ornamentals and lawn. **Fire ants will be popping up everywhere after big rains. It's still not too late to apply the product that controls for a full season, or you can periodically apply baits and mound treatments.** Call if you are not already on the schedule.

Many St. Augustine lawns have been slow to come out this year after the hard freezes of February and the long drought, but May weather should get them going. We are still seeing some freeze damage on trees and shrubs, split trunks on mimosa and ligustrums, dead sections on oleanders, but most plants are recovering nicely. If you have damage you can finish pruning back to live tissue at this point or remove plants that are too far gone.

Our goal is to fulfill the needs of the customer by providing timely, quality services and products.

Thanks for your business!

May Chores:

- Mow Weekly
- Finish planting spring flowers
- Mulch beds
- Treat for fire ants

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Solutions for Problem Areas

Many yards have at least one problem area, a place where nothing seems to grow. The source of the problem is usually a combination of factors, the most important being soil composition, light exposure, and moisture or drainage. If you have been struggling for years to keep grass under a tree, change the area over to a groundcover that can tolerate the competition for water and lack of light. There are endless choices - liriopse, variegated liriopse, mondo grass, dwarf mondo, Asian jasmine, glechoma, English ivy, and others. If you have a lawn area that seems to get adequate light and water but still won't grow grass, check for compacted soil. You can aerate regularly and even rake organic compost into the holes each time to better condition the soil. If it's a constantly traveled path, perhaps you could set in a step stone path and let the grass fill in between the stones.

Another problem we encounter is boggy areas that tend to stay wet. Constant wetness is a death sentence for many plants, but if the area lends itself to landscaping, there are several interesting plants that tolerate wet feet. The Miscanthus family of fountain grasses tolerate fairly wet soils. Daylilies, Louisiana iris, loosestrife, cannas, obedient plant, perennial hibiscus, and ruellias are great flowering

perennials for wet areas. Elephant ears, umbrella grass, wood fern, and horsetail (equisetum hyemale) are excellent foliage plants for wet areas. It is difficult to find shrubs for wet soils, but dwarf and standard wax myrtles perform well wet, as well as hardy pink or red oleanders. There are some really attractive dwarf oleanders, but they are only marginally cold hardy here. Yaupon and Chinese holly, ligustrum, euonymus, and fatsia are also acceptable as long as they are not sitting in totally waterlogged soils.

Amending boggy areas is possible with the addition of expanded shale and compost, and a well engineered French drain may also help.

Adding organic matter such as compost has long been known to improve drainage in wet soils and also increase the water holding capacity of dry soils. Expanded shale is now the "magic bullet" of soil amendments. It serves the same purposes as compost does but is a permanent component that does not decompose. We have had incredible results in improving poor soils with the incorporation of a 60/40 mix of compost and shale. Mulching with bark products, leaves, or grass clippings also keeps the organic content up, turning to humus as it decomposes.

Have you Been Knocked Out Yet?

This outstanding shrub rose has achieved the Texas Superstar designation for its disease and insect resistance as well as its hardiness and performance. During a four year research study at the Texas A & M University System Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Dallas, scientists found Knock Out to be one of the finest landscape roses that they had ever tested. During testing, no pesticides of any kind were ever applied. It proved to be highly resistant to black spot, the disease that commonly defoliates roses across the country. It is also resistant to powdery mildew and aphids, and is very heat and drought tolerant once established. If you aren't using these great

plants in your landscape, you really need to find a place for them. You won't be disappointed!

The Knockout Family

Red Knockout
Double Red Knockout
Pink Knockout
Double Pink Knockout
Rainbow Knockout



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