

Q. Is it too late to prune my crepe myrtles?

Once the crepe myrtles begin to show some green buds of growth, it is best to not prune them back until next year. If they have grown too big or are rubbing against something they should not be, then do not hesitate to prune them—any time of the year.

Just remember, even though you prune or do not prune your crepe myrtles, it will not affect their bloom cycle. I have had some people ask me if pruning helps them bloom better. It really does not matter. Most crepe myrtles only have a bloom cycle of 90 to 120 days, many even shorter. Therefore, if you do not prune them they will generate green growth more quickly. And even though it may seem like the bloom cycle is shorter, because of the earlier green growth, it really is about the same length of bloom time.

Q. When do you start mowing in the spring?

Simply put, we begin mowing when the grass needs cutting. This does not mean we will wait for the turf to be a foot tall before we cut it, but it also doesn't mean we will cut a lawn just beginning to grow. When the grass starts to show 2 to 4 inches of growth, then we will begin. If the weather is warm enough and the lawn has significant thatch, then we will scalp it even though it may not appear to need cutting. Sometimes scalping is necessary to stimulate the growth of the dormant grass.

Send your lawn care questions to:
celc@sbcglobal.net

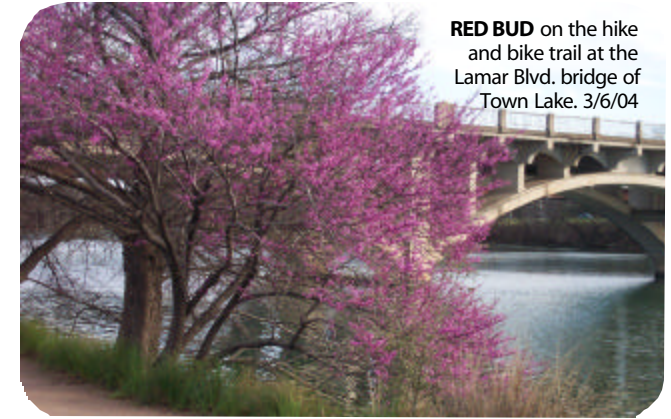
SMILE...Spring is Here!

The most exciting time of the entire season is here. Your lawn and landscape will light up your life with an explosion of color that will have you feeling like you are on top of the world. Think of some of the celebrations of spring—like the red bud trees on Lake Austin Blvd. and West Cesar Chavez Street along the north side of Town Lake. The combination of the reds and pinks is absolutely beautiful.

Also, at the top of our list of spring beauties are the azaleas. Their blooms are

gorgeous pinks, whites, and reds. Good places to see azaleas are along Balcones Dr. between Northland and W. 35th St., and in Tarrytown, Brykerwoods, and Enfield neighborhoods. One of these areas is south of W. 35th St., east of Lake Austin, west of MoPac, and north of Enfield Rd. Another area is south of Windsor Rd., west of Mopac, north of Enfield, and West of Lamar Blvd.

We can wait all year, and we will not find a more enjoyable time to celebrate the joy of being outside, planting flowers, and cleaning up our landscapes. The weather is as close to perfect as it will get. If you need us to help you get some color in your beds, please call us.



RED BUD on the hike and bike trail at the Lamar Blvd. bridge of Town Lake. 3/6/04



AZALEAS in Tarrytown just starting to bloom. 3/6/04

The Best Spring Flowers

Spring is the time for flowers. Is there one flower that looks great, grows in all soils and conditions, deer do not eat, and needs very little water? Nope. Well, unless you're partial to silk flowers. Anyway, the good news is that there are many flowers and colors to choose from for just the application and result you desire.

About the only flowers you do NOT want to plant this time of year are pansies or dianthus. These are winter flowers, and no matter how good a sale the nursery may have on them, they will be short-lived when the heat rolls around.

Here are just a few tips of what we—or you—might want to plant:

Sun: periwinkles, marigolds, zinnias, portulaca

Partial sun: all types of begonias, petunias (spring only, will die in summer from heat)

Shade: begonias, impatiens

These are just a few of the types of annual flowers that can be used to make an area beautiful. When perennials are included, the choices are almost endless. Call us if we can help you "colorize" your beds.

Two Important Springtime Lawn Care Decisions

To Scalp or Not to Scalp?

As the lawn mowing season begins, it's time to decide if you want your yard scalped. The way to tell if it needs scalping is if there is a lot of dead grass mixed in with the green sprigs coming up. When we scalp a yard, we cut it to approximately 1 inch in height, and we bag it. That takes away most of the ugly yellow stems. Then, we let the grass grow to a height of approximately 2½ inches. At that point there is 1½ inches of dark green turf covering the remaining dead grass, and the yard looks beautiful.

To Fertilize or Not to Fertilize?

Yes, the lawn needs fertilizing. The decision is who will do it: you or us. In early spring, we use a high concentration of nitrogen to stimulate growth and choke out as many weeds as possible. We also include a pre-emergent in the fertilizer to stop many of the weeds that try to come up.

All bags of fertilizer have three numbers on them. The first number indicates the amount of **nitrogen**, which makes the grass grow. We use a high nitrogen number in the spring to get the grass off to a good start after its winter dormancy. The second number is for **phosphorous**, which is needed for blooming shrubs. And the last number is **potassium**, which mainly affects root growth. We use a high Potassium number in the fall to encourage root growth in an effort to strengthen the grass and roots in anticipation of cold weather. We generally apply two rounds of slow-release granular fertilizer annually. We find this is a sufficient amount for most yards. However, if you would like to apply more to your lawn, we can assure you it will only help the lawn.

As a precaution, all fertilizers are not meant for all yards. We are very careful in the types of fertilizers we apply. If you choose to fertilize your lawn yourself and know which one to purchase, then that's great. If

you don't know, please give us a call and we'll be happy to advise you on which one would be best for your lawn. When buying pre- and post-emergent fertilizer, you need to be extremely careful in selection since they are designed for application over specific types of grasses. For example, if you purchase a "weed and feed" fertilizer that is for Bermuda lawns, it will significantly harm any St. Augustine grass it touches because St. Augustine grass is similar to the broadleaf weeds it's designed to kill. Read the bag for a list of grasses it is suitable to be used on. If you are not sure or the bag has no instructions, then don't do it! Consult a professional.

A quick note on tree fertilization. We do not do intensive tree fertilization and disease control programs. If that is what you want or need, consult a professional tree company with certified arborists on staff. This much I do to my own trees: Apply a top dressing of compost under and out to the drip lines of your trees. This is beneficial to the trees and grass alike. You can do this almost as many times a year as you like as long as you are using a mild organic compost.

If you want a year-round program of fertilizer, pre-emergents, post-emergents and insecticides, we recommend Austin Fertilization (261-4711) without hesitation. The owner, Andy Herzberg, is a small independent contractor who has done a lot of work with and for us. His program is primarily a liquid application.

If you want a standard granular program, we can do that. We provide that service to over a 100 customers. If you prefer an organic program, we can provide that for you as well. Call 835-4144 or email us at cele@sbcglobal.net, and let us know what you would like for us to do for you!



Basic services:

- Mow
- Edge curbs, walks and driveways
- Blow clippings from hard surfaces

Other services available:

- Apply mulch to beds
- Fertilize lawn and shrubs
- Trim shrubs
- Trim tree limbs away from houses
- Trim low hanging tree limbs
- Clean beds (weeds, trash)
- Bag lawns when leaves are too many to mulch
- Clean out rain gutters and blow off roof
- Power wash walks, driveways and decks
- Repair sprinkler systems
- Check and reset sprinkler system
- Plant colorful annuals in fall & spring
- Plant winter rye grass in fall
- Replace shrubs and beds
- Line beds with steel, vinyl or stone edging

In the winter, we can also:

- Wash outside windows
- Repair privacy fences

Contact us for an estimate anytime!

Clippings

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"Attitude is contagious. Is yours catching?"