



**DR. R.E. MOON +
ASSOCIATES**
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Gardening by the Moon

March 2024

**Harvest
Spring Landscape Q&A
with Dr. R.E. Moon + Associates**
Saturday, April 13th, 9 AM-11 AM
At Harvest Market Day



Texas Two-Step

By Dr. Moon

If you do not like cohabitating with Texas fire ants, now is the time to use the tried and true Texas Two-Step. No, I am not referring to the dance. I do not recommend dancing or stomping on any fire ant bed. The ants always win! But if you use the Texas Two-Step control method, you will no longer need to watch every step as you walk and work in your yard and garden, and it will prevent mounds around your foundation where ants can enter your home.

Fire ants start to become active in the spring when temperatures warm to 65 degrees and during periods of heavy rain to protect their beds. Once temperatures warm, ants build beds, foraging for food and producing young. Purchase your control materials now, watch for the first signs of activity, and then Texas Two Step with the Ants.

Texas Two-Step Method for Fire Ant Control: The first step is to apply a product containing a food source and an insecticide. Spread the bait over the entire yard, and the ant workers will carry the bait back to the mounds. There are organic baits on the market – Safer Brand Fire Ant Bait and Green Light Fire Ant Control with Conserve, or you can use Amdro Ant Bait or Advion Ant Bait. The second step is to treat individual mounds that remain active by drenching them with organic products such as Safer Brand Fire Ant Mound Drench Citrex Fire Ant Killer or any insecticide mound treatments such as Ortho Fire Ant Killer. You can purchase these products or something similar at Home Depot, Lowe’s, or online. Turn off the irrigation system and avoid rainy weather when applying products.



BUSTING WATERING MYTHS

By Jacob Cheatham

Knowing the best way to water your landscape in Texas can be tricky! Let’s bust some myths about watering that can help you save water and have a healthier landscape.



Myth 1: Most plants die from lack of water

Did you know most plant deaths in residential landscapes are caused by overwatering, not under-watering? Water is an essential resource for plant roots, but it is only half of what they need. Roots also need to breathe! When plants are overwatered, the air in the soil gets squeezed out, and the roots can suffocate.

So, how do you prevent overwatering? There are two ways to determine whether your plants need water. The first is to feel the soil. Feel the soil with your fingers at 2-4 inches depth. Does it feel moist? If so, don’t water! If the soil is dry, turn your irrigation system on. The following method is to look at the plants themselves. If leaves start to wilt or turn yellow, it is time to turn on the water. However, sometimes overwatered plants can look the same as underwatered ones, so it is good to verify by checking the soil.

Myth 2: It is better to run your irrigation system for a short time more frequently

The best way to encourage a healthy root system so plants require less water in the future is to water them deeply with less frequency. When plants have shallow watering, their roots are not encouraged to grow deep for water. More profound root growth is encouraged when irrigation systems can saturate the soil more deeply.

But water tends to run off with our clay soils before it seeps into the soil! This problem can be solved by having multiple run times for a single watering event. For example, if it takes 21 minutes of running spray heads to saturate the soil, break that time into three different run times of 7 minutes with a break in between to allow the water to seep in.

Myth 3: Irrigation systems work just as well as natural rainfall

There is no substitute for a good rain! Natural rainfall has a couple of advantages over an irrigation system. Even the best-designed irrigation systems can have poor coverage. There may be some spots that are over-watered and some that are under-watered. Good rain will provide much more water, even watering.

Did you know that rainwater also comes with its fertilizer? Lightning strikes fix nitrogen from the air and make it available through rainfall for plant use. Rain droplets also pick up other minerals from the air and transport them to the soil as they fall. That green-up after a needed rain is not a fluke. It's because of nature's fertilizer!

Watering your home landscape does not have to be a mystery. If you pay attention to the signs your landscape is giving you and follow the watering guidelines listed above, you should go into the summer with plants that are well adapted to need less water.

REJUVENATE, REPLANT, & REFRESH YOUR LANDSCAPE THIS SPRING

REJUVENATE

- **Clean up leaves and debris**
- **Cut dead tissue out of trees and shrubs**
- **Cut back perennials & ornamental grasses**
- **Remove any dead plants**
- **Fertilize trees***
- **Fertilize shrubs ***
- **Fertilize turf* (water the lawn after fertilization)**
- **Apply pre-emergent weed control***

**always follow label instructions for application rates*

REPLANT

Accent Trees, Shrubs,
Perennials & Ornamental Grasses



REFRESH

After all rejuvenating and replanting, refresh with a double or triple ground, dyed brown mulch in beds.



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