**Shade Trees**

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Planting a shade tree makes your yard more pleasant because you can escape our relentless summer sun. A shade tree planted on the south or west side of your house can also reduce your air conditioning bill. A lawn shaded by a tree will also require less irrigation to keep it green. If the tree or trees provide too much shade for your lawn grass, plant a shade tolerant groundcover such as Asiatic jasmine, blueshade ruellia, lirope or monkey grass and your landscape will require even less supplemental irrigation.

Among the best shade trees for the San Antonio area are live oak, Mexican white oak and Texas red oak.

Live oak adds the most property value to a landscape. Once they reach 20-25 feet tall they are very attractive with sturdy horizontal branching and shiny small leaves. Live oak is long lived, drought tolerant and pest resistant. Its major weaknesses as a shade tree selection are that it grows relatively slowly, has a tendency to send up suckers from the root system and has some susceptibility to oak wilt.

Mexican white oak has many of the same desirable traits as live oak and it grows faster. The species is not susceptible to oak wilt and does not seem to send up root suckers. Mexican live oak is an evergreen in the same sense as live oak. It may drop its leaves for a short period but not every year at the same time. Expect your Mexican white oak to occasionally drop is leaves.

Texas red oak is a deciduous tree that can have good fall color when it has the right genetics and the weather cooperates. The species grows as fast as Mexican white oak and is nearly as long lived and drought tolerant as live oak. Individual Texas red oaks will sometimes become infected with oak wilt but the disease does not spread through the roots to other red oaks, like it can do in live oaks.

Also consider cedar elm, Mexican sycamore (not American sycamore) and chinkapin oak.

**Gardening Tasks**

It is essential to provide regular irrigation to fruit trees with fruit if they are going to bring the fruit to full size for harvest. Irrigate every week if it does not rain.

If you applied a pre-emergent herbicide in March to prevent sand burs, it is time to apply the second application. Crabgrass Preventer, Amaze and XL all work well.

If the birds are attacking your tomatoes before they reach full ripeness, you can pick the fruit early as soon as it shows any color change. Let it finish ripening in the house.

Remove spent flowers or seed pods from esperanza if you want them to maintain their bloom.