

# Growing Pittosporums Beautiful But Can Be Tricky

**Dear Plant Doctor:** My pittosporums are wilting and appear to be slowly dying. The plants most affected grow in a low area that tends to hold water after it rains. What can I do to save these plants?

—Topsail Beach

**ANSWER:** Japanese or Tobira Pittosporum (*Pittosporum tobira*) is a terrific ornamental shrub for southeastern North Carolina but it does have its problems.

A native of eastern Asia, the "pitts" have found a home in many eastern North Carolina landscapes. Observant gardeners know that pittosporums produce wonderful small clusters of white fragrant flowers early in the spring. Prone to winter kill when temperatures dip below 15F, pittosporum is tolerant of a wide range of insect and disease pests. However, the real strength of pittosporum resides in the ability to tolerate hot dry soils and salt spray.

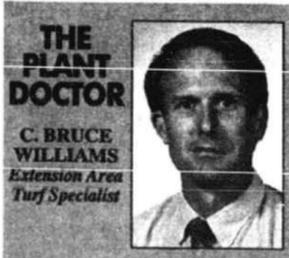
Your plants may have stem rot (*Pellicularia rolfsii*), foot rot (*Diplodia sp.*), root rot (*Phytophthora sp.* or *Phymatotrichum omnivorum*) or a host of other disease pathogens that interfere with the ability of the plant to translocate food or water. I recommend that you prune out any diseased or dying limbs on otherwise healthy plants. Remove and destroy dead or dying plants.

Plan to renovate the low-lying bed this winter or early spring and replace with a raised bed. Adjust soil pH to range between 6-7, amend soil with needed nutrients (based on a soil test), and raise soil bed six to eight inches to prevent further disease problems.

Do not replant diseased or sickly plants in the new raised bed. Regular use of preventive fungicide sprays for most systemic wilt-type diseases are not normally practical, effective or desirable in the home landscape.

**Dear Plant Doctor:** Is it too late to plant ryegrass? I couldn't get my lawn overseeded this fall but hope to be able to spread some seed during the Thanksgiving holiday. Am I wasting my time?—Wallace

**ANSWER:** Yes, no or maybe. The ideal time to plant annual or perennial ryegrass in southeastern North Carolina is during October. However, ryegrass can be success-



**THE PLANT DOCTOR**  
C. BRUCE WILLIAMS  
Extension Area  
Turf Specialist

fully planted throughout the winter if weather conditions are mild. Ryegrass seedlings can be injured or killed by freezing temperatures. If ryegrass is seeded during very cold weather, seed will lay dormant on the soil surface and not germinate until warm spring temperatures arrive.

Planting ryegrass too early in the fall results in an increased incidence of disease and insect problems. The absolute best time to plant ryegrass is 30 days prior to the first hard

frost. The average first hard frost in southeast North Carolina is usually during the first two or three weeks of November, hence my recommendation for an October planting date.

**Dear Plant Doctor:** I am concerned about the loss of a sand dune near my beach cottage. What can I do to slow or stop the loss of this dune? Are there any plants you would recommend that would help?

—Long Beach

**ANSWER:** Salt spray, shifting sand, extremes in temperature, low

organic matter, poor soil-water holding ability and lack of essential plant nutrients make the near-ocean or oceanfront environment very inhospitable to most plants. Sand erosion on dunes and beachfront is due to multitude of factors. Research by Dr. Steve Broome and others have shown that strategically placed sand fence, beachgrass or other adapted vegetation can dramatically influence dune formation and beach renourishment.

Dune renourishment with vegetation is a complex topic and I recommend you contact your county Cooperative Extension Office for sources of beachgrass and brochures published by UNC-SeaGrant or the Soil Conservation Service that detail time, method and care of beachfront vegetation.

Send your gardening questions or comments to the Plant Doctor, P.O. Box 109, Bolivia NC 28422. Please send a self-addressed stamped envelope if requesting information or a reply.



## WILSONS

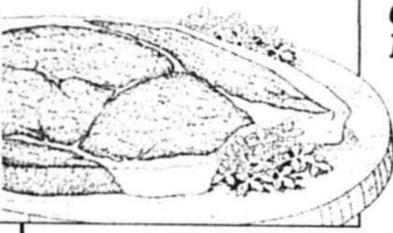
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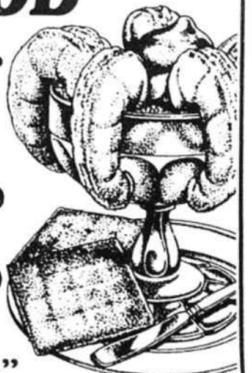
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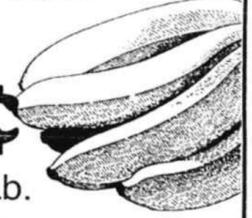
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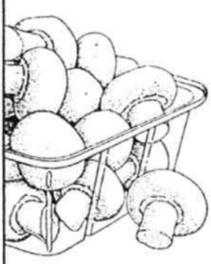


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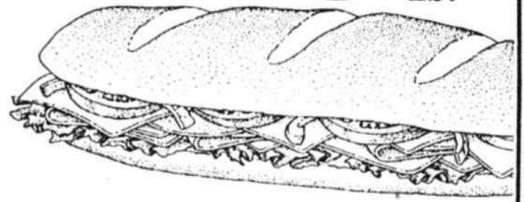


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### School Art Department Wants Stamps

Shallotte Middle School's art department is asking area businesses and individuals to save postage stamps from their incoming mail for art projects.

The department is collecting the stamps through the end of November and asks that those willing to save them tear the whole envelope corner off with the stamp attached. Stamps should be brought or mailed to Shallotte Middle School to the attention of Lola Jackson.

The art projects will be part of a school fundraiser. For more information, call the school.

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