



# ask the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

**Welcome to my weekly series!**

Email or mail your questions to: [info@sprigsandtwigs.net](mailto:info@sprigsandtwigs.net) or  
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**Question #1 this Week:** *This is a picture of one of my pachysandra beds. I have 3 beds the other 2 are healthy, I will admit that I've fed the other 2 once this year with Miracle Grow and they are watered every other day with my irrigations system. We have had a drought this summer, maybe a little worse than last year (this bed does not get direct water from the system), but I'm not sure that was a problem; it's always survived. Is this dying or is it in some molting stage? What should I do? – Nick*

**Linda's Answer:** It is almost certainly due to the drought we had this summer. The tree has a fibrous root system just below the surface of the soil which soaks up an enormous amount of water daily. Any plant growing under the tree is going to lose the "water uptake race" to the tree. A few weeks ago, I wrote about a process called transpiration where large trees take 700 or more gallons of water out of the soil and send it to its leaves, every day!



In the spring, I would cut the entire pachysandra bed down with a lawn mower set on the highest setting. Do this in mid-late May to mid-June when the stored sugars and water are moving up from the roots into the stems of the plants. Add a bag or two of compost around the stressed area and fertilize with Hollytone. Hollytone is a dry, slow release, organic fertilizer. Water it in and fertilize again the middle of July. Do not use Miracle Grow. Miracle Grow is a high nitrogen, quick release fertilizer that has a lot of salts in it. Over time, the salts in Miracle Grow cause the pH of the soil to go down (become more acidic) which will eventually affect the growth of the plants. And finally, water, water, water. Pachysandra does not like dry soil.

*Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 19 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..*

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