

Gain good yardage for Super Bowl with tips from pros

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Entrusted with preparing the proper greeting for the thousands who will pour into Reliant Stadium for the XXXVIII Super Bowl, and the millions watching the game on television, beautification crews are landscaping a welcome as warm as a summer day.

With just over a month to go before the Feb. 1 game, crews from Houston Landscapes Unlimited are digging, planting, mulching and mowing to ready emerald-green lawns and avenues of color in the footprint of the stadium.

Turf areas throughout Reliant Park have been overseeded with annual rye for fingers of lush green.



And Dean Carpenter says his company is planting new trees, shrubs and winter color at Kirby and McKee, at Kirby and Westridge and at Holly Hall and Fannin, the three main Reliant entries. The plantings include 'East Palatka' hollies, Indian hawthorns, 'Plum Delight' loropetalums, dwarf Burford hollies, 1,650 pots of 'Aztec Grass' and 5,000 red, white and blue pansy plants.

Houston Landscapes Unlimited, tapped by the Harris County

Sports & Convention Corp. for the beautification project, installed the original landscaping and irrigation around the stadium and has the ongoing landscape maintenance contract for Reliant Park.

Houston homeowners interested in greening up for the Super Bowl can oversee their St. Augustine lawns with rye and expect results in two to three weeks, Carpenter says. Before evenly spreading the seed, mow the St. Augustine and remove any thatch buildup. Good soil contact, sun and moisture are essentials for germination. Rye lawns require mowing and will die out when the weather warms.

Pansies at Reliant will be pampered with soil and spray fertilizers to promote strong blooms.

"We'll leave nothing to chance," Carpenter says.

Home gardeners who duplicate the patriotic theme can enjoy blooms in beds and containers winter through spring.

Late fall and winter are ideal for planting trees and shrubs. Home gardeners looking for an evergreen tree with winter/spring red berries might consider the 'East Palatka' holly, a good choice for our urban area.

Indian hawthorns are a Houston garden staple, and more recently, loropetalum has become a popular, low-maintenance shrub in



The cold-tolerant 'Panola Blue Imp' pansy would be a super addition to a Super Bowl landscaping update in your front yard.

our landscapes. This shrub offers burgundy-green foliage and hot pink, fringed blooms primarily in late winter-spring. The foliage holds its burgundy color best in cool weather.

As the game nears, Carpenter says, crews will address details such as edging and refreshing mulch for a manicured look. He reminds home gardeners that the organic matter, best spread in the fall, is used not only for cosmetic purposes, but also for discouraging winter weeds, helping maintain soil moisture and, as it decomposes, giving off heat that keeps roots warm.