

Fungus and Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Last week I talked about mushrooms in lawn and just in general settings. This week I want to talk specifically about any mushroom like activity that is connected to growing trees. If you recall, I mentioned that mushrooms were the seed or spore producing part of a fungus organism that fed on decaying organic matter. If that fungus organism is feeding on dead grass roots or the roots of a tree long ago gone from your yard, that's one thing. But if you are seeing mushroom growth around the base of a tree that's still alive or growing out of the side of a tree that is still growing, that is never a good sign. These kinds of fungi do not attack and kill trees, they move in on tissue in trees or tree roots that is already dead. Think of them as little red flags or simply an early warning sign. I've been seeing a lot of trees around the area that have active fungal growths. I've seen mushrooms growing up right at the base of trees. I've seen the big old conch shelf type growths on the sides of trees and I've seen the stuff that looks like whitish foam on the trunks of trees. None of these are good news. They are the sign that the tree is in decline. There is dead wood in the trunk or stump of that tree. Dead wood is not strong wood and they are an indicator that the tree is losing structural integrity and is at risk of falling down with or without a windstorm. If you are seeing mushrooms or some kind of fungal growth around the base of a tree or on the trunk of one of your trees, please give me a call. We can't predict when the tree may fail, but it's going to be better if it is removed before it falls! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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Field Bindweed in Lawns

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've been pleasantly surprised with the number of questions I've been receiving of late about controlling field bindweed. Field bindweed is a deep rooted tough perennial weed that will grow anywhere. It's a long vining plant with pretty trumpet shaped white flowers. It dies back to the ground every year and then comes back like gangbusters the next spring. Because it is a deep rooted perennial, this isn't going to be a one and done treatment. Figure 2 to 3 years of concentrated effort to get a problem cleaned up. Any of our broadleaf lawn weed control herbicides is going to be effective against bindweed.

Probably my preferred product is going to be one that is labeled for crabgrass control as well as broadleaf weeds and contains the active ingredient quinclorac. This product is very good against bindweed. But anything that contains 2,4-D is going to be effective in lawns. Given the lush growing conditions I would be treating infestations right now, and then following up with another treatment in early October. This time of year perennial plants are busy storing food in the root system so the herbicide gets pulled down to the roots for maximum impact. Bindweed in gardens and flower beds is another story. You don't want to use anything with 2,4-D in these locations. Its best to wait until fall when you are through gardening and then treat with glyphosate or Roundup. Glyphosate has no soil activity so you won't impact next year's garden. If you can get bindweed vines away from garden plants you can carefully spray with roundup anytime. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Waterlogged

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. In case you haven't noticed it, things have gotten wet all of a sudden. This can change back to dry in a matter of just a couple of weeks, but in the meantime there's a few things to keep in mind. When we've had as much rain as we've had, soils get waterlogged and lose oxygen content - this can lead to root death. If you have automatic lawn sprinklers, I sure hope you turn them off in times like this. Adding more water to already waterlogged soils is just asking for a disaster. One inch of rain a week will keep lawns growing very well with no supplemental irrigation, especially under the cooler temperatures we've been seeing this summer. The other concern is riding lawn mowers. You need to be very careful with these when mowing lawns on saturated soils. Zero turn mowers are the worst and I have seen a LOT of wheel spin damage in lawns in the past couple of weeks. Slow down and take it easy, especially you lawn care companies. Sure, you may have gotten behind on mowing, but that's not an excuse to start tearing up lawns with tires! There's also an increased risk of soil compaction with these larger riding lawn mowers so if we get the chance this fall, meaning not too wet, core aerating may be a good idea! Gardens and flowerbeds need to be treated with care. The rain and wind is helping keep spider mites down but leaf diseases are getting ready to explode on garden plants. If you see some leaf spots starting to develop, start treating with a garden fungicide. Try to get thorough coverage and work on treating both upper and lower leaf surfaces. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.