

Dealing with Spider Mites

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When it comes to insect pests in our yards and gardens I think we all prefer to deal with the enemy that we can see. So spider mites are really annoying, because they are so small they are hard to see and they tend to feed on the bottom sides of leaves. So when we deal with spider mites we are often looking for the damage and may never really see the pest. Spider mites love warm dry weather and their populations have really been building in recent weeks. Spider mite feeding damage usually shows up as a stippled appearance on the leaves. Stippling is simply caused by many little yellow dots which are the dead spots from where the spider mite fed. Heavy infestations are often accompanied by webbing on the undersides of the leaves. I usually have to put leaves under magnification to see the mites. Another problem with mites is that we don't have a lot of really good pesticides to deal with them. And then we need to get the products sprayed up under the bottom sides of the leaves where the mites are. Often the best way to deal with mites is to use a strong water spray throughout the plant canopy twice a week. This dislodges the mites, larvae and eggs. For garden crops, this may be the best approach. If you use this, do it early in the morning so the leaves will dry off quickly. On ornamentals, you can probably get some control with acephate or orthene. Any product that contains Neem oil will also provide some mite control and is usually labeled for a very broad swath of plants including fruits and vegetables. As always, read and follow label directions. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Japanese Beetles

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. You may not see them this year. You may not even see them next year, but they are coming. They are Japanese Beetles and they will be an ever growing problem, as if we didn't have enough already. Japanese beetles are actually kind of pretty. They are a scarab so they have that basic beetle shape. They're about ½ inch long, they have a shiny green head and their wing covers are a coppery brown and they'll often have white spots on the side of their body behind the last leg. The problem with Japanese beetles is that once they get well established you don't have a few, you have bunches. With many of the scarab beetles, the immature, grub stage, is the most destructive. But with Japanese beetles, the immatures AND the adults are voracious eaters. The adult's feeding damage often results in skeletonizing of leaves resulting in a lacy look. They seem to be very fond of roses but will feed on a large number of plants. They like to feed in groups and when disturbed they will tend to just fold up their wings, fall to the ground and play possum. This habit makes it easy to dislodge them from plants into buckets of soapy water. The beetles also seem to be more attracted to plants that are in full sun, as opposed to shade loving plants like hostas. The adults can also be controlled with most any of the lawn and garden insecticides. While these products can give anywhere from 1 to 3 weeks of protection to plants, the products can also kill all the predators of spider mites resulting in a build up of two spotted spider mites. But spider mites are a topic for another show!

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Bermudagrass control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If you go 100 miles further south than us, Bermuda grass is a commonly used and accepted lawn grass. Most people around here consider it to be nothing more than a weed. While I don't encourage it, you can kill out Bermuda this time of year and then start over with a fescue or bluegrass lawn in September. But be forewarned that if your neighbors still have Bermuda grass, it will come creeping back into your yard, although there are some newer products that can help with that, but that's for another show. To kill the Bermuda you need for it to be growing pretty good. If you haven't been watering it, apply a couple of irrigations to get a growing good. Then apply a thorough spray of glyphosate. Be very careful not to spray desirable vegetation as glyphosate also known as Roundup or Kleenup will kill most anything. Glyphosate works slow so wait about ten to fourteen days and water the lawn really good a couple more times if it doesn't rain. Then spray it again even if you think everything is dead. Bermudagrass can be very tricky and tough to kill. Once you have applied the second application and waited about a week, mow the lawn real low. If you have had a thick stand of Bermuda you may have to till it and rake a bunch of the dead rhizomes and stolons up and get rid of them. If it's just a little bit creeping in here and there, you can probably plant right through it with a power seeder. Use a good tall fescue or bluegrass blend. Avoid the quick fix seed mixes or anything that contains grass species other than tall fescue or bluegrass. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.