

### Instant Summer!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Wow, on May 2<sup>nd</sup> we had 32 degrees and snow flurries. Twelve days later we were in the low 90s with a very July like hot and dry southwest wind. I sure hope you enjoyed the 3 days of spring that we had. Fortunately, since then we've sort of gotten back a little bit closer to normal for the last half of May. The warmer than average temperatures from last week moved plants along quite a bit and started to catch us up a little bit, but there's a limit to how much catching up plants can do in a short period of time. Just realize that gardens and plants may be running behind normal for a good part of the season. One thing that the warm weather did accomplish was to get the grass plants popping seed heads quickly. All grass plants produce seed heads. If you are mowing your lawn regularly you may never notice it, except that once we are past that stage of growth, the grass just seems to be growing more slowly. The period of rapid growth is actually the plant sending up all those seed heads more so than leaf production. You should be noticing a greatly reduced growth rate now. But it is very important to those lawns that you keep mowing them high. 3 inches is a minimum, in my opinion, for any lawn and 3½ inches would be preferred for tall fescue lawns. Or as I tell most people, just set your lawnmower to the highest setting and leave it there. Mowing tall will reduce vigor of the lawn, open up areas of the lawn to weed invasion, reduce root mass of your lawn which then leads to a much less drought and heat tolerant lawn. Mow tall and keep your lawn happy! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Plant by soil temperature

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Humans, at least gardeners in this country, tend to be driven by the calendar. The clock and the calendar are constantly driving us to be here or there at this time and at this hour. Mother Nature, and for that matter most of the rest of the world, cares neither about the calendar nor the clock. I think the extremes of last spring and this spring are wonderful examples of that. Just for fun, I planted my potatoes around the traditional St Patrick's Day. It had been cool but seemed to be warming up but my potatoes, instead of coming up in about 3 weeks, didn't come out of the ground for 6 weeks. Many flowers that we plant each spring, especially by seed, are very sensitive to soil temperatures. Last week soil temperatures took a big jump, but this week they're leveling off and maybe even retreating a little bit. Soil temperatures are no mystery and the best way to measure them is to buy a digital cooking thermometer with the 4 inch metal probe end on it and just take this out to your garden or flower bed at about 9 in the morning and stick it in the ground. Give it about 3 minutes to equalize and voila you have your soil temperature. For those annual frost tender plants, you really need soil temperatures above 65 degrees and for many, including sweet potatoes, either the vegetable or ornamental, above 70. The roots of these tender plants tolerate our heat because they like warm soils. Planting them into cool and damp soils is guaranteed to get a case of root rot going. So be patient, even though we want spring now, and let the soil warm up before you plant your flowers.

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## Mushrooms

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Mushrooms are a mystery to many homeowners.

If you want morels you can't wait to get out into the woods after it's started to warm up to find those tasty morsels. But the same warm, rainy, humid weather that causes morels to appear will also pop up mushrooms or toadstools if you will, in your yard and garden causing you frustration and possible consternation as you try to deal with them. Mushrooms are the fruiting body of a fungus organism. They are to the fungus plant, what the apple is to the apple tree or the tomato is to the tomato plant - the carrier of the seeds for the next generation. Only in the case of fungi and mushrooms, the seeds are called spores and they are tiny and they look like powder. Some mushrooms are edible and tasty, others are edible and not so tasty and others are deadly poisonous. Leave mushroom sampling, outside of the nearly unique morels, to the experts! The fungus organism that gives rise to the mushrooms is a cobwebby looking mass that may be growing in the soil on decaying organic matter, or under the bark of a dead or dying tree, living on organic matter, do you see a common theme. There's no way to stop mushrooms from growing in your yard. They are a natural product of decaying organic matter, usually old tree roots. Just mow off the mushrooms when they come up, or kick them off or something like that. Both spring and later in the summer also realize that a period of rainy or wet weather is going to bring more of the mushrooms popping up in your yard. In the long run, it's all for the good!

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