

Wintering Power Equipment

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 be yet but you soon will be through with your lawn mower, the roto-tiller, the weed eater or the leaf blower and there is a very understandable urge to park it, hang it up, drop it in the corner and forget about it until next spring. What I have to say about that is, **WRONG!** Take the time this fall to clean up, fix up, tune up all of that powered lawn and garden equipment. My preference would be to take your equipment in to a local small engine repair firm and let them take care of it. I'm all about keeping those trained professionals busy. Taking equipment in this time of year also removes the pressure of , "I need it fixed **RIGHT NOW**". You're in no hurry and neither are they. But if you're a handy do it yourself kind of person, that's fine too. Clean up the equipment. Wipe off the dust and grease, mud and little pieces of vegetation. Change the oil. Remove blades of mowers, clean and sharpen them. Wipe down the blade with a little bit of light weight oil before storing to protect from rust. If your equipment has a battery, remove it, clean the terminals and the connectors on the cables and store the battery in a protected location. Today's gasolines are far more stable than 50 years ago, but it wouldn't be a bad idea to drain the gasoline or at least use a gasoline stabilizer. Clean the air filter, or better yet just replace it. Replace the sparkplug and before you put the new one in squirt a few drops of oil inside the sparkplug hole to keep the cylinder lubricated. By doing all of this now, you can have your equipment ready to go first thing in the spring! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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Putting Away Hand Tools for Winter

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Just like with our power equipment, there is a tendency that when we get through with hoes, saws, shovels, pruners, etc. for the last time in the fall, we just dump them in a corner until we need them next spring. But this is a less than ideal approach. My grandfather and my father were both sticklers about keeping tools clean and organized. One thing that they both instilled in me is that when you get done with each piece of gardening or yard work tools in the fall, start the process of putting it away for the winter. The nice thing about doing it this way is that you don't do it all at once. Some tools you are already done with, others you may be using for a while yet, but as you get done, process that piece and tuck it away for winter. Start with a good cleaning. Using different size and styles of steel brushes, get all the dirt, plant parts and gunk cleaned off the tool's working surfaces. Most garden tools have a sharpened edge so go ahead and sharpen that up and treat the bare metal pieces with a light layer of lightweight oil to reduce rust. Shoot a little oil into moving metal joints also. If the tool has a wooden handle, also clean it and then inspect for rough spots for possible splinters. Touch up the handle with sandpaper and then treat it with a good quality exterior grade polyurethane varnish. This seals far better than linseed oil and doesn't attract dust. If a handle is in really rough condition, spend a little extra time with the sandpaper and then put on two or three coats of polyurethane. Once this dries, you are then ready to put it away for winter. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Planting Bulbs

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Once we flip the old calendar to November, many people think that the gardening season is over. Well, just because Halloween is now behind us, doesn't mean that you have to stop outdoor work. One of the things that either cracks me up or annoys me is that spring flowering bulbs show up in the stores in late August and by the time you really should be planting them, in mid to late October, it's hard to find them. On the other hand, you can often find a lot of spring flowering bulbs on the discount table by early November and really get some good deals on them. While the best quality bulbs may be gone already, you can often get some really good deals still on bulbs in early November. Spring flowering bulbs, and I mean things like tulips, daffodils, crocus and hyacinths can be planted a long time into the fall. Basically, if the soil temperature is still above 40 degrees you can expect root growth and continue planting. As of late last week we still had soil temperatures in the 50s so we can be planting for a long time yet! One year, mainly because I forgot about the bulbs, I planted tulips between Christmas and New Years. The bulbs came up, albeit a little late, and bloomed just fine the next spring and they are still blooming every spring. Just remember to plant the bulbs as deep as the directions call for. Mix a little bone meal into the bottom of the planting hole for a good boost of phosphorus. Then, after you get the hole filled in, sprinkle a good garden fertilizer, like a 13-13-13 over the planted area and over all of the areas that have bulbs planted to maintain blooming! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC,

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