

Planting Grass Seed

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. September, especially early September, is THE month to be planting the cool season lawn grasses, tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass. You want to get it planted as early in September as possible to give it as much chance to get a decent crown and root system developed before late fall and winter get here. Sure, it seems hotter than normal now and you'll probably need to water it, but pretty soon nights will be longer than days and then the weather will start cooling down quickly. While you can plant grass seed clear into November, I strongly encourage a September seeding date. Planting rates are very critical. You only need one seedling per square inch. In fact, more than that, the proverbial thick as hair on a dog's back, is not good as before long the grass will start to crowd itself out and the whole planting will die. If you are planting a new lawn, plan on 6 to 8 pounds of tall fescue seed per 1,000 square feet or 2 to 3 pounds of Kentucky Bluegrass per 1,000 square feet. If you are overseeding, trying to just thicken up a thin lawn, use half that rate or 3 to 4 pounds per 1,000 of fescue and 1 to 1½ pounds of bluegrass. It is critical to get the seed into the soil. Broadcasting doesn't work unless you follow up with something to get it into the soil about 1/4 inch deep. After planting I would advise a light watering daily, or perhaps twice a day, to get the seed germinated and growing as quickly as possible. Once the grass is up about an inch, water less frequently and more deeply. Once the grass is 3 inches tall start mowing it. The clipping action stimulates additional tiller production!

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Little Barley Control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Little barley is a weedy grass that most homeowners don't even notice until late May or June when the seed heads are maturing and the annoying little pointed seeds are in their socks or their pet's feet! Little barley is one of those grasses that we call a winter annual. It starts growing in the fall, grows rapidly in the late winter and early spring, goes to seed in April and May and dies by June. Once it is up and growing it is very difficult to control and once it has started to head out, you are really out of luck. Little Barley is only going to be a problem in areas of your lawn that are thin or have bare soil, which if your lawn is like my lawn after the past few years, that's a lot of it. In the long run, the best way to deal with little barley is to get a thicker stand of grass that you mow tall. Little barley seed likes sunshine to germinate so tall grass shades the soil and keeps it from germinating. So if you've had a problem, possibly the best thing to do is to get your lawn overseeded this fall and concentrate on getting the grass up and growing this month. If you aren't overseeding this fall then you need to treat now with a pre-emergent control, often called crabgrass preventers. If the little barley is a problem in buffalograss lawns or other warm season lawns then you need to use a product containing Surflan. You can also use surflan on tall fescue. Or, in fescue and bluegrass lawns you can also use crabgrass preventers containing dimension. Whichever you use you need to apply it as soon as possible and then water it in with ½ inch of irrigation to get it activated!

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Planting Fall Containers

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I know many gardeners plant containers of flowers every spring and by this time of year they may be looking rather bedraggled, pretty well shot out or just flat out dead. So this year, why not try something different, why not try planting fall containers. Most containers are up close to your home or a building of some kind and will be protected from those early frosts we invariably receive, that are then followed by a month of good growing weather. First of all, if your spring planted pots are still looking good there is no need to do anything, just keep them watered and fertilized. But if they are dead or looking tough, here's some things to consider. The rule of thumb on containers is to mix something tall with something that trails (or vines) and then a filler. And surprisingly, a lot of nurseries have a surprising amount of material available at this time of year. Flowering plants are kind of limited, but you can go with asters, mums, marigolds, pansies and vincas. Even just a small pot planted with pansies and vincas can bring some front door color nearly to Thanksgiving some years. Other plants to consider are asparagus fern, coleus, fennel, ivy, lettuce or mustard plants, millet, ornamental cabbage or kale, ornamental corn, ornamental grass even ornamental peppers. If you are a K-State fan, fill up some pots with purple and white mums. Just like with spring containers, make sure to freshen up the potting mix, water down well and give them a little fertilizer. Of course, if all your containers are still looking good, you can always buy more containers and fill them up! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.