

Fall Lawn Seeding Tips

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We are mere days away from the start of the fall lawn seeding season! Can you feel the tension? Okay, so maybe not. The most common mistakes made in lawn seeding comes down to placement of the seed, too much seed being planted or improper watering. Typical tall fescue seeding rates are 6 to 8 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet. Planting too much seed will result in a stand that looks like hair on a dog's back but after a few weeks it will start to die from competition. Likewise, using too little seed will result in a thin stand and a thin stand of fescue becomes a clumpy stand of fescue. Not a good option either. The next important step is to insure good seed to soil contact. Spreading seed on the soil surface and hoping that you can water it enough to get it growing just isn't going to happen. You either need to work the soil up and have it nice and soft, then broadcast the seed and rake or harrow it in, OR you use some form of a drill or planter such as a power seeder. Seeders make narrow slits in the ground and place the seed down in the slit about 3/8 to 1/2 inch deep. Think of the soil as a blanket that needs to surround and envelop the seed allowing moisture to be absorbed by the seed to start germination and then to keep the germinating seed moist while it develops leaves and a root system. Lastly, once the seed is planted I recommend that you start watering it. You need to keep that soil surface moist until roots are developed. That may mean watering once or twice a day for the first couple of weeks. Once the grass is an inch or two tall you can start to reduce frequency. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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Winter Squash Harvest Tips

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Pokeweed

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. People of my age and slightly older remember the song from the late 1960s called Poke Salad Annie. Much to many people's surprise, poke, or more correctly pokeweed and sometimes pokeberry, inkberry or pigeonberry, is a real plant that is used in the early spring, especially in the southern US to make cooked greens with. Poke is also found here in Kansas and this time of year it is developing deep purple berries that can be very attractive to young children. The problem is that poke is actually poisonous. It's not deadly poisonous, like hemlock, but it can cause cramping diarrhea, vomiting even difficulty in breathing. The roots are the most toxic part of the plant, but all parts can cause poisoning symptoms. When consumed in the early spring it is usually double boiled and the water discarded to get rid of the toxins, but even with that, I just don't think I want to eat it! The plant is a perennial and will continue to grow in the same area, and spread, until it is killed. Birds readily eat the berries with no ill effect and thereby spread it to many locations. Poke can easily grow up to five to six feet tall and this time of year the stem is very thick and usually red to purple. The berries are borne on long fingers of fruit changing from whitish green to deep purple of black as they mature. They readily stain your fingers if you handle the seeds. At this time of year you're probably best off to just cut it off at the ground to remove it as a temptation to small children. Then next year, remember where it grew and start treating the small new shoots with herbicide.

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