

Fungus gnats and other winter time indoor insect pests

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It isn't uncommon in the middle of winter for me to start getting calls about insect problems inside of homes. Without fail the homeowners have house plants that were outside during the summer and were brought inside in the fall. There's a whole host of critter issues that can be on these plants. Often we are dealing with things like whiteflies, mealybugs and scale insects. Plants like hibiscus seem to be magnets for these insect issues, but they can honestly be on almost any house plant that came in and once you have them on one, you have them on all of them! Sadly, the easiest solution is often to pitch the infested plants in the trash and be done with it. But it never ceases to amaze me of the emotional attachment that some homeowners will develop to plants. Perhaps it was a plant that they got from a grandchild or a grandparent. I don't have a lot of room to talk - I still have an iris I got from my great Uncle Rudy and I have a peony that came from a root sprout of the plant that my grandmother Otte planted on the homestead nearly a century ago. But anyway, with house plants, if you don't want to pitch them, start with insecticidal soap. Treat them every few days remembering to treat directly on the insects. Sometimes you can cut a plant way back and let it resprout and start treating early on when you have just a few stubs. Other times you may be dealing with fungus gnats coming out of the soil. These look like small mosquitoes but they don't bite. Treat the potting soil, where the maggots live with BT the israelensis form, sold as Gnatrol. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Perfection is a Flaw

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I rarely read blogs. Sadly, as much as I love reading, I rarely read very much at all. I skim, I glance I read only what I have to and then I'm back to answering questions and often writing things myself. But a friend sent me a link to a gardening blog on the internet. Lots of pictures, not many words and it was the top ten practices for a wicked good garden. Well, that wasn't quite the title, but I can't really repeat the title on the air. One of the tips was check perfection at the garden gate. The crux of the matter was that a perfect garden doesn't exist. We all have weeds, we all have aphids sometime during the year and we all have other very real problems. The minute that Adam and Eve got the boot from the garden of Eden, we were fighting an up hill battle. That's just the way that nature works. One of the most important things when I work with gardeners is to simply accept that there will be challenges. There'll be weather damage to plants. Every gardener pushes the season and pushes the plant hardiness zones, so know you're going to get bit sometimes! Don't spray the entire lawn if you have only 2 or 3 weeds. 75% of all lawn and garden pesticides are applied for purely aesthetic purposes. The treatment doesn't do anything to improve the health of the plant. You simply want it to look "purtier"! Let aphids develop early in the season so the good insects have something to build up on. Sure, you may lose a rose bud or two, but so what. Look beyond the flaws of the imperfect flower, look at the beauty of the mass of blooms. Remember, perfection is a flaw. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Peach leaf curl control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Someday it is going to warm up. No, I'm not kidding, it really will. And once we have about a week solid of nice weather, peach leaf buds will start to swell and if you haven't applied your dormant fungicide sprays, you will wind up with disfigured peach leaves. These leaves will fall off and while the tree won't die, if you did have peaches on the tree, they will wind up being smaller and less desirable. Now here's where the confusion comes in. If you go into a garden store or a hardware store you will probably see the word dormant on one thing, dormant oil spray. So you buy it and spray. Dormant oil is for one thing and one thing only, scale insects which we don't have that much problem with. Yes, I have seen scales on apple trees and pear trees and a whole host of other ornamentals. I've seen scale insects kill ornamental plants, but not that often. And I've rarely seen scale insects on peach trees. Dormant oil, while effective on scale insects, will do NOTHING towards controlling peach leaf curl which is a fungus disease. There are three active ingredients out there to control peach leaf curl. They are Bordeaux, liquid lime and sulfur and chlorothalonil. All three are sort of readily available. Bordeaux is a powder and a pain to mix. Liquid lime and sulfur stinks to high heaven (think rotten eggs). If you want an organic approach, use one of these. The third product, chlorothalonil is a thick liquid but mixes up easily and provides good control of peach leaf curl, as do the other two. Whichever you use, prune the tree first, then spray well possibly twice. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.