

Peach Leaf Curl

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We're in the heart of winter, but we've got some nicer days ahead which means, believe it or not, there's numerous things that the gardener can be doing outside! One of the earliest things that we start thinking about needing to be done is treating peach trees for peach leaf curl. Peach leaf curl is a non-fatal leaf disease that while not killing the tree, can sure mess up fruit production IF you happen to have a fruit crop set on. This fungus overwinters on the buds and twigs of the peach trees and is literally just waiting there to infect the new peach leaves as soon as the buds break open and the new leaves emerge.

Fortunately, the disease is easy to control with a dormant season application of a fungicide. This application can or perhaps we need to say should be done in the next 6 weeks before buds start to break open. Treatment needs to be done when temperatures are above 40 degrees. I like to spray twice about 2 weeks apart. The reason for two treatments is that you are spraying the twigs and branches and it can be very easy to miss some critical part of the tree. By spraying twice, you've got a better chance of getting the necessary thorough coverage. You need to make sure that you use either Chlorothalonil, Bordeaux, or liquid lime sulfur. These are all fungicides that are effective against peach leaf curl. Do not make the mistake of buying something called a dormant oil or just a dormant spray. These are used against scale insects and will do NOTHING to control peach leaf curl. Chlorothalonil is readily available and may sometimes go by the trade name Daconil. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Fruit Tree Pruning

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Trying to grow tree fruit in Kansas can be, quite bluntly, a crap shoot. Our weather, especially spring weather, can be so variable that a good looking season can go bust in just one night. But regardless of the odds, if you are serious about trying to grow fruit in Kansas, you need to take good care of your fruit trees each and every year. Part of that care is to prune the trees annually. You need to start pruning when the trees are planted. Letting them grow for 4 or 6 years and then starting pruning is akin to letting a child have it's way for the first 5 or 6 years and then trying to discipline them. You really have to start from the very beginning. The whole idea of pruning is to maintain a tree with a strong structure that doesn't have problem branches. A well pruned tree will seldom have branches that become overloaded with fruit requiring propping. A well pruned tree also has optimum light getting to most leaves and also allowing for easy spraying with pesticides if needed. Not all trees are pruned the same. Apple and pear trees are pruned differently from peach trees which are pruned differently from cherry trees. It comes down to where the fruit bearing buds are on the tree and the groups I mentioned are all different from each other. Pruning is best done in the dormant season, traditionally February and early March, but nice days in January are not too early to give it a start. I'm not going to try to tell you how, we have a good bulletin here at the office on fruit tree pruning and K-State Research and Extension have a couple of good online videos about pruning! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Starting Onion Plants

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. For the gardener who has spring fever really bad, starting your own onion plants can be a great way to get a jump on the season. It can be difficult to find specific onion varieties in sets or transplants, so growing from seed may be a preferred option. Onions are one of the first plants to be seeded for transplanting because they take a significant amount of time, 6 to 8 weeks, to reach transplant size and because they can be set out relatively early, late March in much of eastern and central Kansas. Therefore, we want to start onions in mid- to late-January. Onion seed should be placed ½ to ¾ inch apart in a pot or flat filled with a seed starting mix. Place the container in a warm (75 to 80 F) location until young seedlings emerge. Move to a cooler location (60 to 65 F) when the seedlings are 1 to 2 inches tall. Make sure they have plenty of light, using florescent lights if needed. Start fertilizing when the seedlings reach 2 to 3 inches tall using a soluble fertilizer with each or every other watering. Onion seedlings tend to be spindly with the remains of the seed sticking to the end of a leaf for several weeks. Encourage stockiness by trimming the ends of the leaves when the plants reach 4 to 5 inches tall. Start hardening off the onions in early March by moving the plants to a protected outdoor location. You may have to move them inside temporarily to protect them from extreme cold snaps. A couple of things to keep in mind. We need medium or intermediate day length onion varieties to get the best bulb development. Also, an ounce of onion seed is about 7,000 seeds. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.