

Tomato Variety Selection, part 2

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Last week we were talking about some recent tomato variety trials and I wanted to carry that theme on this week. We have many ways to classify tomatoes. Heirlooms are the tomatoes, usually pure lines, that have been around a long time. Hybrids are newer and do not breed true from seed. Then we also have determinate and indeterminate types. Indeterminate are like many of the old style tomatoes. They grow and grow and bloom and grow and can get quite large. The newer hybrids are usually determinate - they grow to a certain size and then produce like crazy. Determinate tomatoes were really developed for mechanical harvesting and for people that want to have a lot of very similar sized fruit ripe at the same time. Tomato variety trials have confirmed several things that many of us already knew. On average, heirloom varieties have large fruit size. If you want a big slicer, get an heirloom variety. But the modern varieties average higher yields. On average 20 to 25% more pounds. And if you're interested, that was 13.5 pounds per plant for heirlooms vs 16.5 modern hybrids. Indeterminate varieties tended to have larger fruit than determinate. That's no surprise because determinate are more likely to spread the weight out over more fruit. The one that everyone wants to know about is taste. Which ones taste better. Because everyone has different taste requirements, that one wasn't even tested. You need to find one that you like. So if you want a lot of tomatoes to process, get modern hybrids. If you want a bigger fruit, that to me tastes better, go heirloom! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK,

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Radon

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Starting Trees Right

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Before we know it spring will be here, no, I'm serious, and once again we'll be planting all sorts of things including trees and shrubs. We spend good money, sometimes big money on these trees and what kind of operator instructions do we get? Usually something to the effect of, water as needed.... and that's just about it! What's even more frustrating Extension doesn't even have a good owner's manual for young trees. So listen close and maybe I need to get something written. When you plant a new tree, regardless of the size, it's going to be under stress for the first 3 years. As many trees are overwatered as underwatered. Basically you can't just water by the calendar, you need to be feeling the soil to know for sure. Start by creating a grass free zone out 2 to 3 feet from the trunk of the tree. Dig out the sod a couple inches deep and fill back in with organic mulch like wood chips. Grass is a mean competitor and if you keep the grass away from the trunk, you also won't hurt the tender bark with your weedeater. If we are getting regular rains, of at least an inch a week, you don't need to water. If it is dry, water the tree with a slow running hose once a week. If it gets really hot and dry, twice a week. Don't stand there with a hose for five minutes and think you're helping because you aren't. Turn it on slow, lay it down and leave it for an hour! Don't fertilize the first year or two, just let it get settled in and start developing roots. If your tree is staked, make sure that the guy wires or ropes aren't super tight and make sure they aren't cutting into the bark! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.