

Squash Bugs

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Every gardener that has tried to grow summer squash - meaning zucchini or yellow crookneck types, knows all about squash bugs. Squash bugs are those grayish black bugs up to about 3/4 of an inch long. Being a true bug they have a piercing sucking mouth part and they literally suck the juice right out of a squash plant. They will feed on all squash species including the pumpkins, but the winter squashes, like butternut and Royal Acorn seem to be resistant. Right now the 1st generation squash is really cranking up and you need to start trying to get these under control even if it doesn't look like very many. If you don't, the second generation that will come along in August will totally wipe out your squash plants. You almost need to start treating before you see any squash bugs, but I'd say check every couple days for squash bugs and as soon as you see even one, start spraying. You can try to catch and kill those early few, and it may help for a while but treatments will eventually need to be initiated. I would rotate between two or three different insecticides. When you treat, be sure to spray up under the leaves as much as possible and treat early in the morning while they are active. You can also put wooden shingles on the ground near the base of the plants so the bugs will hide under them in the daytime - then you can flip the shingles and spray the bugs. Consider using permethrin, cyfluthrin, bifenthrin, and include spinosad as well as it may be the best. Sevin appears to be very poor on squash bugs from recent studies. Be sure to read and follow all label directions. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC,

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Fall Garden Planting

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. While some gardeners are struggling just to keep their garden going in mid July, the savvy gardener is busy planting for a fall harvest. Many of our garden vegetables that we plant in April and early May can also be planted in July, August and early September. Several garden crops can and should be planted in mid to late July. More plantings of snap beans can go in now as can cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower, if you can find the plants - you may have to go to a garden center for those. Carrots and beets can be planted now as can potatoes. If you are putting in transplants keep them well watered and maybe shade the young plants with wooden shingles for the first two weeks. Later on in August you can plant lettuce, radishes, spinach and turnips. Several things that you need to remember. The ground is much warmer now and seeded crops will germinate very quickly. June was wet and warm which means that nitrogen was probably pretty well lost from the soil rooting zone. You will need to apply a preplant fertilizer and then side dress about every three weeks. Watering and weed control are critical. Keep that competition down. Many of these plants may struggle a little bit right now because of the heat and using wheat straw to mulch the ground can be a very good idea. Insect problems may also show up more quickly so scout the garden daily and be ready to move quickly. By now you may be wondering if all of this work is worth it but here's what I'll say about that. When it's September or October and you're still getting fresh produce, yes, it's worth it! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Herbicide damage on tomatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've been getting a lot of tomato plants brought into me in recent weeks all suffering from the same affliction; herbicide damage. Herbicide damage is pretty easy to spot. Often the new growth is twisted, you see a lot of bowed or curved branches that should be straight, and leaves that are not growing right. The leaves are often cupping up and the leaf is thicker than normal, almost giving a leathery feel. Tomatoes are one of a group of plants that are very sensitive to what we term phenoxy growth regulator herbicides. This group of herbicides includes the very commonly used 2,4-D and dicamba as well as several others. These are the herbicides that are in virtually every broadleaf lawn weed killer on the market, a.k.a. the dandelion sprays. The crazy thing is that these sprays do not have to physically touch the plant. If there are vapors in the air that are strong enough that you can smell the 2,4-D, then they are strong enough to damage tomatoes. The spraying doesn't have to be close by either. It can be several blocks away. Just like smoke from a fire being carried on a light breeze, the damage may show up on only a few plants in a garden. The bottom line is that there's nothing you can do but wait for new growth to come out. Don't cut off the injured portions of the plant, just wait it out. More importantly, if temperatures are going to be over 75 degrees, don't spray those dandelion killer type herbicides anywhere and especially not near the tomato plants in the garden. Wait for cooler weather and a light breeze blowing away from the garden. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.