

### Putting Tools Away for Winter

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Just like with our power equipment, there is a tendency that when we get through with hoes, saws, shovels, pruners, etc. for the last time in the fall, we just dump them in a corner until we need them next spring. But this is a less than ideal approach. My grandfather and my father were both sticklers about keeping tools clean and organized. One thing that they both instilled in me is that when you get done with each piece of gardening or yard work tools in the fall, start the process of putting it away for the winter. The nice thing about doing it this way is that you don't do it all at once. Some tools you are already done with, others you may be using for a while yet, but as you get done, process that piece and tuck it away for winter. Start with a good cleaning. Using different size and styles of steel brushes, get all the dirt, plant parts and gunk cleaned off the tool's working surfaces. Most garden tools have a sharpened edge so go ahead and sharpen that up and treat the bare metal pieces with a thin layer of lightweight oil to reduce rust. Shoot a little oil into moving metal joints also. If the tool has a wooden handle, also clean it and then inspect for rough spots for possible splinters. Touch up the handle with sandpaper and then treat it with a good quality exterior grade polyurethane varnish. This seals far better than linseed oil and doesn't attract dust. If a handle is in really rough condition, spend a little extra time with the sandpaper and then put on two or three coats of polyurethane. Once this dries, you are then ready to put it away for winter. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Soil Testing Contaminated Sites

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Gardening is slowly becoming a popular activity again. We are seeing more and more people in urban and suburban areas starting to garden.

Often times residents call me wanting to test their soil to make sure it isn't contaminated with pesticides. Pesticide contaminated soils are very rare and also somewhat expensive to test for.

There's not a simple soil test to say, yes or no if there are high levels of pesticides in the ground.

You have to test for individual pesticides and each one can be pricey. Fortunately the newer compounds that we are using have very short lives in the soil, and it's been long enough since we used some of the older long residual products that it's unlikely that you'll have any risk. If you do have questions, contact me because potential problems are going to be very site specific.

One risk that we may not pay close enough attention to is lead contamination in soil. Lead contamination can come from many sources, most of which we don't have to worry about around giving the absence of metal mining and smelting operations. But in older parts of town, basically areas build before 1975, lead that was in house paints could be an issue. If you are starting to garden around your home, especially closely around the house itself, you may want to get the soil tested. Usually we are going to find fairly low levels of lead in the soil, but if you are outside, a lot, with young children, do you really want to risk it. The K-State Soil Testing Lab can test for lead and it's only about \$15. Contact me for more details on that. But if your house is newer, there's not a risk! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Tartarian Honeysuckle

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I periodically receive questions about plants.

Okay, I receive a lot of questions about plants. When we get this late in the year and after we've finally had a pretty good frost I'll get questions about plants, woody shrubs in this case, that haven't lost their leaves yet, and in the case of the plant I'm thinking of, it's loaded with bright red berries. This is Tartarian Honeysuckle, sometimes called bush honeysuckle. It has been planted in the horticultural trade for well over 50 years and was quite popular in the 50s and 60s to plant around houses. It is very hardy, it provides good cover and the birds love the berries. Which is exactly the problem, the birds love the berries. They eat them, they, shall we say, distribute the seeds all over the place and the seeds take root and grow. What we've known is that Tartarian honeysuckle is not native to North America and what we've discovered is that it is yet another horribly invasive plant. It grows very well under light to moderate shade so it has moved, thanks to the birds, into many of our native timber areas. Once it gets established it thrives and spreads and chokes out all the native plants that used to exist in the understory of our native woodlands. We are at risk of losing a generation of oaks and walnuts and hickories and many other species because of this plant. If you don't have it, don't plant it. If you do have it in your yard, we need to start cutting them down, treating the stumps and replacing with more desirable non invasive species. If you have questions about Tartarian honeysuckle, please give me a call. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.