

Natural Needle Drop on Pines

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As I was out and about town the other day I saw the tell tale sign of future phone calls. I saw needles on pine trees turning yellow. Pine trees are classified as evergreens. They are called this because unlike our deciduous trees, like ashes, oaks, elms and maples, they do not drop their leaves, or needles if you prefer, in the fall. The problem is that many people just assume that since they are called evergreens, they never drop their leaves. Which is not the case. Pines only hold on to needles for 2 to 5 years depending on the species and the climate. On average, most of our pines will hold needles about three years. In early fall, the older needles which are the ones furthest back on the branches, will start to turn yellow and fall off. Some years we'll have a lot of needle drop and some years, especially following drier weather, we may have very little needle drop. This needle drop may happen over a slow period of several month, or it may all happen quickly in just a couple of weeks. If you notice needles way back on the branches turning yellow, sometimes bright yellow, and falling off, don't panic, this is normal needle drop. If needles are turning brown and staying on the tree, especially those at the ends of the branches, this is not good and we need to figure out what's going on. We had a good rain last week, but if we go a month with NO rainfall, you will want to water your pines and spruces with a slow running open hose under the tree for a day or two. Oh, and those pine needles that fall off from needle drop, rake them up and use them as mulch. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Weed Control in Lawns

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. October is the time when we need to treat lawns for all those little weeds that bloom in our yards early in the spring. These are all winter annuals. They start growing now, overwinter and then grow like heck and bloom in the spring. In mid to late October we normally will have most of these weeds sprouted and growing. We had good rains last week, and the weather is cooling off a bit now so these nasty little plants are sprouting and getting established. All you have to do is walk around to bare spots in your yard and you will probably start to see these little seedlings popping up and filling in. At this time of year they are sweet little plants and they are quite tender and vulnerable. If you treat them with herbicides now, they are very easy to kill. If you wait until next spring when they are starting to bloom, they are much tougher to kill and they'll produce viable seed even if you do treat them then. From now through early November is a great time to treat with lawn weed killers or the weed and feed granular products. There is a difference between crabgrass preventer that you apply in spring and these weed and feed products. Crabgrass preventers stop weeds from germinating. Weed and feed products kill weeds that are growing. Ultimately, the best way not to have weeds is to have a thick lawn that you mow tall, 3 to 3½ inches. If you mow short, you will have bare soil areas and you will have more weeds now and more crabgrass in the spring. Treat with weed and feed, mow tall and you'll have a happier lawn. You can also use liquid weed killer products now also if you wish! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Call Before You Dig!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I have a county agent friend in another part of the state, who will remain anonymous. Many years ago he was putting in a new fence and was using a post hole digger on the front of a skid steer. He was making great progress, until he hit an underground fiber optic cable. He never mentioned what it cost him to have it fixed but I know he and his insurance company had a bill that had to be paid. Since that time I've seen more and more of those underground horizontal boring machines just about everywhere you look putting more and more wires of some sort or another underground. If you are planting a tree, putting up a new fence, just sticking a hole in the ground of any kind, you need to make sure you aren't going to hit something. Hitting an underground power line or gas line could be dangerous and fatal. As my friend found out, hitting a fiber optic line can be expensive. Fortunately there is a free service called Kansas One Call that will help protect you from that horrible or dangerous oops. If you are getting ready to do any digging, dial 811 or go on line to kansasonecall.com and request a locate. I was putting up a purple martin house this spring and used them for the first time. They were wonderful, helpful and by getting them involved, I was protected if anything happened. Before you call, mark where you are going to dig and include the entire area you will excavate - think of planting a tree. Like I said, the service is free. They respond very quickly and they take away the dread of, what if I were to hit something. You may think you know what's underground, but play it safe! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420

KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.