

The Crickets are Coming, The Crickets are Coming

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, and some of you are already aware of this, but we are probably going to see one heck of a cricket invasion starting just about any time now. I'm surprised with last week's cool weather that we weren't seeing more move in around our homes. We actually have several cricket species in Kansas. Even throwing out the weird looking camel crickets and mole crickets, we still have house crickets, field crickets and striped ground crickets. It's these last three that really drive us crazy with their nocturnal chirping in the far reaches of our bedroom at 2 in the morning. But far and away, most of what we see trying to get in to our homes is the field cricket. I'll tell you right now that there's no guarantee that we can keep all the crickets out of your house this late summer and early fall. The first step is to make sure that doors fit tight and don't spend time holding doors open as you come and go from your residence - good luck with that if you have kids! Next, use a general purpose lawn and garden insecticide and spray a 6 to 12 foot barrier around the perimeter of your house. I'd even spray up on the foundation a little. Then using a premixed ready to use indoor treatment, spray the thresholds entering your house and the baseboard areas. That's where crickets like to travel. Crickets will still get inside your house but you are just hoping that they pick up enough of the insecticide that they die before they are able to keep you up for very many nights in a row. Always read and follow label directions when using any pesticide. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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## Rain Crow

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Every once in a while a listener has a special request and today is one of those columns. We have a bird in our area every summer that many folks know as a Raincrow. I grew up knowing very well the kuk-kuk-kuk, kow-kow-kow call of the Rain Crow on summer evenings, especially just before an impending thunderstorm. Even if you've never heard of a Rain Crow, it's quite likely that you have heard them. The Rain Crow isn't really in the crow family. It is more correctly called the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. It is in the Cuckoo family along with the Common Cuckoo of Europe, made famous by, yup, the cuckoo clock. An interesting side note here - the well known Roadrunner is also a member of the cuckoo family. Yellow-billed Cuckoos arrive back in early to mid May. Cuckoos nest in shrubs and small trees, but they will occasionally also lay eggs in other bird species nests. Exact timing of nesting is somewhat variable and is believed to be tied to abundance of local food sources. When there is an abundance of food, eggs will be laid and the Yellow-billed Cuckoo can go from egg being laid to fledging and leaving the nest in 17 days! Yellow-billed Cuckoos are very beneficial as they primarily feed on caterpillars but will also take crickets, katydids, grasshoppers and cicadas. They are rather skulking and retiring birds, often seen flying into a clump of shrubs in an almost stealthy like manner. While still occasionally vocalizing they do not do so as frequently now and will start heading south in migration and be pretty gone by mid September. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Get those Hummingbird Feeders Up

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We are heading into the heart of hummingbird migration season which will last through the end of September and early October. Many people ask me every year if they can get hummingbirds to visit a feeder in their yard. Obviously the earlier in the season you get your feeders up the better your chance, but I would not hesitate to put up a feeder even now as we have about 6 weeks of the season left. Place the feeder in a sunny location where it is easy to see. You can hang it off a fence, off the eaves of the house, from a rod pushed in the ground designed to hold a bird feeder. But I have had the best luck with feeders in full sun. I like to have the feeder at least 3 to 4 feet above ground level to keep it away from potential threats like cats, but you can mount it even 7 to 10 feet in the air if you wish. You don't have to have an expensive feeder, just get an inexpensive one from the hardware and farm supply store. The nectar or sugar solution you fill it with is no big secret; 1 part sugar to 4 parts water. It does not have to be dyed red, in fact current research suggests that it not be dyed at all. Do not use honey, use granulated sugar. Honey can damage the hummingbirds. I rarely fill my feeders all the way full, because I don't have so many that they'll drink it down quickly. You should probably refill and clean your feeders every couple of days. Some people think every day is necessary but the sugar water won't really go bad that fast. So get those feeders filled and hung and then just sit back and see what shows up. If you have any questions, give me a call!

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