

Gardening Tips for December 7 - 13, 2015

After the storm - trees

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Whether we like it or not, we had an ice storm, we had some trees that were damaged, and now we get to clean up the mess. The good news is that we don't have to rush into this. Once you get all the bigger stuff on the ground moved off the lawn, go ahead and rake up the smaller branches as well as the occasionally thick and matted layer of leaves that resulted from all that rain and ice. Then you can wait for the wind to start knocking a few more loose limbs to the ground. Take time to evaluate your tree. If you lost 50% or more of the tree, you probably need to remove the tree and start over. Trees that were split in half, don't try to salvage the remaining half. It won't last long. Just take the entire tree out. Then consider some pruning of the storm damaged trees. You should never top or stub out a tree. Cutting those larger branches back to a stub provides no place for the tree to heal the wound and will cause a proliferation of poorly attached growth at the end of that stub that will just bust off in some future ice or wind storm. Always cut branches back to the next larger branch, if possible or back to a normal junction of some sort. Don't put pruning sealer on those wounds. Those actually slow healing. If you feel the need to do something, paint it with neutral color latex paint, but you don't really have to do anything on those cuts. For larger trees with damage, hire a professional arborist to do the work. Sometimes, other than cleaning up everything that broke out of the tree, you may be better off to do nothing. But don't be in a hurry and be wary of door to door tree hackers! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

Chuck Otte.

After the Storm - bushes, lawns, etc.

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. While ice storms definitely take a toll on trees, they also will impact shrubs and lawns. A thin layer of tree leaves that may not have really been a problem, may become a problem as all the rain and ice really matted them down. Then there are all the little branch tips and fine wood that rained out of those trees. Get that stuff raked up in the coming weeks, or until the next wintery storm comes through. Even a thin layer of leaves that get's matted down can suffocate patches of lawns. If you had large branches come out of trees that tore up turf, carefully try to get those limb divets placed back. Be careful that you don't do too much tamping down as these saturated soils will compact really easily. Next spring you may just have to spot seed in areas that were badly disturbed. Some shrubs may have broken stems. These can be cut out to the ground or trimmed back to the next larger, or major branch. This gives a normal point for healing to occur. Shrubs, especially evergreens, that were bent way over may take several weeks to straighten back up. Other than removing obviously broken branches in shrubs, I like to leave them alone until next spring. These plant have amazing resiliency if we just leave them alone. Now, here's a word of advice for the next ice storm or even a heavy snow storm. When those evergreens become bent over with the weight of ice or snow, leave them alone. Your attempts to reduce the weight load on those shrubs may wind up causing damage that wouldn't happen if we just left them alone. Mother Nature often takes care of her own, without our help! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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These long winter nights are getting to me!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It cracks me up to listen to people complain about daylight savings time, and how early it gets dark, blah, blah, blah. Okay, the official start of astronomical winter is December 22nd. From the 21st to the 24th we will have the shortest days of the year, 9 hours and 25 minutes of daylight. However, sunup doesn't become later until that day and then start getting earlier, nor does sundown get earlier until that day and then starts getting later. That old 23 ½ degree tilt of the earth on it's axis causes funny things to happen. Sundown is already as early as it will be. From Dec 2 through the 14th, sundown occurs at 5:05 p.m. and then on the 15th it slowly starts to become later. By New Year's eve, sunset is already ten minutes later. Sunrise, however, will slowly get later and later until January 9th when it will finally begin to come earlier. We'll spend nearly three weeks with sunup occurring from 7:45 to 7:47 a.m. But by the end of January we will have already gained 45 minutes of daylight over the shortest days of the year. Intriguingly, our coldest days of the year on average coincide with when we finally start to get earlier sunrises, about the 9th of January or 3 to 4 weeks after the winter solstice. Likewise, our hottest days of the year occur 3 to 4 weeks after the summer solstice. There's a lag time in getting the hemisphere cooled off and then warmed back up. So, the moral of this story is that while we are heading into the shortest days of the year, it is already getting ready to change. And while everyone complains about the early sunset, few people notice how quickly it goes the other way! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420

KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.