

Looking for a different tree?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Let's face it, we have a limited number of well adapted trees for our area. I'm not going to talk about evergreens this morning, I'm talking about deciduous trees or shade trees. Due to numerous factors our list of possible trees has gotten shorter. I've stopped recommending ash trees because of emerald ash borer. Elms simply aren't a good option. Many trees that will grow here, like silver maple, hackberry and cottonwood just aren't good choices for yard trees. So what do we have left? Well, there's the Caddo sugar maples that I talked about a few weeks ago. Look for a John Pair or Autumn Splendor. We actually have several oaks that grow faster than you may think. Consider a northern red oak, a shumard oak or even a scarlet oak or cherrybark oak. There are numerous others but they will grow slower. One of my favorite trees is bald cypress. No you don't have to grow them in a swamp, but you'll want to put it where it has room and you don't want to grow grass as it produces a lot of shade. A couple of trees that may be harder to find but are worth considering include American Hornbeam which is good for wetter areas in high maintenance lawns and hophornbeam. All of these may be a challenge to find in the nursery trade, but should certainly be looked in to if you want to try something different. For spring flowering trees of course we have the native redbud. I will now make a bunch of folks upset and suggest it is time we quit planting the ornamental pears of any variety. Too many issues and I would prefer that we use flowering crabs. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

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Late Winter Lawn Schedule

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As we move on through February and into March, spring looms ever closer. And with every warm day that we have in the coming weeks, spring fever in homeowners and lawnaholics will rise more and more. Until we get into mid March, we really need to just keep our horses reined in. The grounds cold and grass is only barely starting to wake up although recent warm spells have pushed some new green leaves up a tenth of an inch or two. Once we hit mid-March then you can start spot spraying or treating broadleaf weeds. If you didn't treat last fall and you have a lot of little green weeds out there then a full yard treatment will be in order. If you did treat last fall but you have a few weeds coming along, then a spot treatment is all that you'll need to do. Be sure to treat on a day that is 50 degrees or warmer but avoid rain or irrigation within 24 hours. Once we get to the last week of March or the first couple weeks of April you can apply crabgrass preventer. If you are using something with Barricade or Dimension for crabgrass control, you can apply these a little bit earlier as they are longer lasting. But be sure to check label for rates and if or when a retreatment will be in order. If you haven't core aerated your yard in a while, do this before anything else. If you need to do some overseeding or reseeding, don't apply any herbicides in the spring as they will hinder grass seed germination and establishment. Seed once the soils starts to warm, generally the end of March thru about April 15th. Seeing later in April or May with cool season grasses is not generally successful. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420

KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

What the soil test doesn't tell you

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I routinely recommend soil testing yards and gardens simply as a measure of where we are with general soil nutrition and especially soil pH. But soil testing measures just a few things and while important, there are so many other issues that I see when I make onsite visits for plant troubleshooting. Probably the most common problem I see, especially in lawns, is not enough sunlight. Sunlight drives photosynthesis and grass is a plant of sunshine. Most lawn grasses are going to need 6 to 8 hours of full direct sunlight per day to stay healthy, thick and aggressive. Poor soil physical characteristics rank right up there also. Soil testing tells you a few, albeit important, chemical characteristics of the soil. But they don't tell you if you have a high clay soil or a sandy soil. They don't tell you if you have compaction issues in the yard. They don't tell you if you have shallow soil that is inhibiting root development. We have a lot of rock ledges and layers and we can wind up trying to grow lawns, gardens and trees in a foot of clay and then solid rock. We can do some things with these sites, but we need to choose our plants carefully! Tree roots, especially walnut tree roots, can really be an issue. They can grab nutrients and water away as quickly as the target plants can. They are ultra competitive for water. Speaking of water, improper watering is a common problem. Excessive watering causes problems as does daily light watering that keeps the foliage wet but not the soil. So keep soil testing, but keep in mind that your problem may be more than just fertilizer. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

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