

## Resist the Urge

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've said it before - gardeners are like honeybees. Any nice day through the winter they have to get out and do something, anything, around the yard or garden. But just like the honeybees, all too often what they wind up doing is nothing more than busy work, or worse yet, it's activities that are too early or will wind up potentially causing problems. It isn't quite the middle of February yet. It's too early for MOST yard and garden activities (but stay tuned tomorrow for one that is appropriate). We had good rains a couple of weeks ago so the ground is too wet to do anything with. In fact, avoid going into garden spots and flower beds as you'll be creating clods and compaction if you spend much time on wet cold soils. It isn't the right time to be spreading fertilizer on lawns and certainly not treating for weeds. You could start pruning fruit trees, but fruit trees only, not ornamentals. Perhaps the best thing you can do is simply cleaning up around the yard. Clean up debris that may have blown into your yard this winter. Pick up branches and twigs that have fallen out of your trees over winter. Like everyone else, I'm ready for spring. That doesn't change the fact that we have five weeks of winter still to slog through. We are a month away from the earliest recommended planting dates for any vegetable garden crop. Yes, I know a lot of folks, and I've done it too, who have planted garden crops in late February. But it's too wet and it's too early to even think about doing it now. Take a walk, enjoy the weather, but resist the urge to do much in the yard. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Peach Leaf Curl Spray

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If you have peach trees then you have probably seen the problem in past springs when all of a sudden, leaves on your peach tree start to curl up and distort and then get all these funny red and yellow distortions and growths on the leaves. The leaves fall off, new leaves come on and all is fine. The only problem is that if you did have peaches on your tree, that damage was already done and your peach crop, rare as they may be around here, has been diminished. The cause of the leaf distortion is a fungus disease known as peach leaf curl. This disease overwinters as spores on the buds and the minute the buds swell and start to break open, the leaves are infected. This disease is easy to prevent with a timely fungicide application in February or March BEFORE the buds start to swell and the break dormancy. Here's where the confusion comes in. Many home gardeners apply a dormant oil spray and think they are protected. In all reality, dormant oil sprays are rarely needed around here and the oil won't do anything for this disease. You need a dormant FUNGICIDE application. Specifically you need a fungicide containing Bordeaux, lime and sulfur or chlorothalonil. Take any nice warm sunny day in February or March, mix up the spray and apply a thorough soaking spray to the entire tree. Make sure it's above 40 degrees and that the spray has a chance to dry before it freezes again. While one treatment is usually enough, I encourage two a couple weeks apart to make sure that there was thorough coverage. It's often easier to spray the tree if you prune it first!

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## Fruit tree pruning

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There is a reason that there are no large commercial fruit orchards in much of Kansas. Our climate is too variable to be favorable for good fruit crops year in and year out. Weather like we are seeing of late is simply not conducive to consistent fruit crops or to get any fruit crop at all some years. Be that as it may, I have fruit trees and encourage people to consider growing some apple, pear and pie cherry trees. Notice, I said nothing about apricot, sweet cherry, peach or many other trees. There's a reason for that. All of those other species are the most susceptible to erratic weather changes. Regardless of whether you think you're going to get a fruit crop each year or not, it behooves you to prune your fruit trees every year as if you will get a crop. I'm not going to try to tell you HOW to prune a fruit tree. That's like trying to tell someone how to paint a landscape picture - not gonna happen. But I will tell you why you prune. You prune to create a strong tree. Trees don't know how to grow, they just grow. So it's up to us to removed limbs that have poor angles of attachment or are too crowded. By controlling this size and structure you also make it easier to spray if you do spray. You prune to control fruit size. A tree has the ability to produce a certain weight of fruit. The tree doesn't care if there are 1,000 apples to make this capacity or 250. By controlling the number of fruit you will have bigger fruit. Finally, you prune to give yourself an excuse to be outside doing something this time of year. February and March are the months to prune fruit trees, so let's get started! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK,

I'm Chuck Otte.