

### Too Wet To Mow?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It essentially rained every other day during the month of May. Conservatively we've had double normal May rainfall. While it's nice to get that kind of rain after drought like conditions, it creates some real challenges for keeping our lawns mowed. For years many of us heard that you should never mow wet grass. From a practicality point of view, it's much easier to mow grass when it's dry than when it's wet. But from a physiological point of view, mowing grass when it's wet will not cause any additional disease problems, maybe just some hassles from dealing with clippings. In fact, sometimes you're better off to mow when it's wet so it doesn't get too big than to wait for a dry day and then take it down too far too fast. Remember the rule of thumb that lawns will stay healthiest when you never take off more than 1/3 the total height of the grass. If it really gets away from you, set your mower as high as you can and then mow it at that height today and then go back to your normal height in another day or two. But if you're like me, the mower is always on the highest mowing height so that doesn't always work. My bigger concern in wet conditions is all the riding and zero turn lawn mowers out there. These are big pieces of equipment and can do a lot of compaction on those lawns. The other problem is that you get on these lawns with the zero turn mowers and you'll start kicking up divets in a hurry and leaving all sorts of sharp turn marks. Slow down on those mowers and make big wide slow turns to protect the turf and the soil underneath it! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Tomatoes, Still

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The calls on tomatoes just keep rolling in. I even had one person, who had leaf spots on their tomatoes, ask if the tomatoes should just be pulled up, tossed and start over with new plants. The answer to that is a resounding no! You will have leaf diseases on your tomatoes every single year. I'm sure we all remember the fire triangle from school where you had to have heat, oxygen and fuel to have fire. Remove one and no fire. Plant diseases have a triangle also. A susceptible host, proper environmental conditions and the disease spore. Tomatoes are very susceptible to foliar leaf diseases. We simply don't have resistance to things like septoria leaf blight or early blight so any tomato plant is a susceptible host. Conditions that favor disease development in tomatoes is moderate temperatures and free moisture on the leaves of the plant. Well, we had rain every other day during May, so that sounds like a favorable disease environment. Finally the presence of the disease spores. The leaf disease spores can survive over winter on plant debris, seeds or on weeds like nightshade and horse nettle, both close relatives to tomatoes. Rain will splash spores up on to the leaves and away we then go! This is why we encourage removing old tomato vines from the garden at the end of the summer and encourage rotating where you plant the tomatoes in the garden. But there are still lots of spores floating around because everybody plants tomatoes! Ultimately, it comes down to keep the leaves dry if you need to irrigate and then just plan to spray with a fungicide much of the summer. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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## Fertilize Warm Season Lawns

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. While many homeowners idea of a proper lawn is exemplified in a dark green stand of tall fescue or Kentucky Bluegrass, there is a growing number of homeowners that, assuming they have full sun on their lawns, are turning to the warm season grasses of Buffalograss, Zoysia or Bermudagrass and their ability to stay green through the summer on much less water. While these grasses are occasionally cursed for their tendencies to run and spread, they do have their place. Since these grasses grow in the warmer summer period, they are often moving into dormancy or dormant when we traditionally think of fertilizing lawns. To do these grasses the most benefit, fertilizer has to be applied when they are actively growing. Buffalograss is the lowest maintenance of the three and while often surviving on no supplemental nitrogen, giving it 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet will give it better color and density. Make this application in early June. While a slow release nitrogen fertilizer would be preferred, standard fast release is also acceptable with all three of these grasses. Zoysia should not be over-fertilized to reduce the rate at which it develops thatch issues. Fertilize it twice a summer with one pound per thousand each time. Fertilize in early June and mid July. Bermudagrass can handle the most nitrogen and is often fertilized, one pound rate per thousand again, in early May, June, July and August. The key thing to keep in mind is that all will survive with just one early June fertilizer a year, and for Buffalograss and zoysia, that is probably preferred. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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