

Crabgrass Preventers

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 a nice thick lawn that you regularly mow tall then you really won't have much of a problem with crabgrass or other summertime weeds. But if your lawn is like mine and is a bit thin in places, okay, there's bare dirt showing, then you are at risk to have crabgrass. Homeowners worry about crabgrass, a lot. They are very concerned about it and they get out there and apply their crabgrass preventers, sometimes a little bit too early. Then by late summer they have crabgrass anyway. So they figure they got it applied too late, and the next year they apply it even earlier. Well, let's slow down and try to get the right cause with the right effect. Crabgrass is a warm season grass that needs soil temperatures of at least 60 and really over 70 to get germinated and really growing. Most years, crabgrass isn't going to start germinating until May 1st and later. Applying crabgrass preventer by April 15th or around redbud bloom time, is more than adequate assuming that it is activated with rain or irrigation. Where the problem comes from is that many preventers need to be reapplied after about 60 days to give good season long protection. Unless you are using a product with Barricade or Dimension, applied at the heavier rate, one treatment is not going to protect your lawn from crabgrass through late summer. So take the time to read the label on the bag. If you've already applied, go back to the store and read the label on the bag of the product you applied. If a second treatment is needed, mark you calendar, buy the product now while you can, and get it applied on time! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420

KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Fruit bloom frost tolerance

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I love growing my own fruit. I hate growing my own fruit in Kansas. If that sounds like a love hate relationship, you're right. In case you haven't noticed, Kansas is not a big fruit production state. You don't see huge fruit orchards all over the place. That should be a big hint to homeowners about reliability of fruit production. The problem is exactly like what we've seen the past few weeks. We get a week to ten days of way above average temperatures, fruit trees break dormancy, weather returns to normal, or below normal, fruit trees are in full bloom or even past full bloom, we have a good frost, and the fruit crop is gone. Apricots are probably the worst, but sweet cherries and plums can be right in there with them. Peaches are next. Apples, pears and tart cherries are our best hope. Location can play a big difference in that, but we'll discuss that another time, or call me if you are thinking about planting fruit trees. How much damage we have from a frost depends on many things, including the stage of blossom development, or fruit set, the wind conditions, moisture conditions, how cold it got and for how long. We normally figure we need one to two hours at a critical temperature for damage to begin. And the difference between a 10% kill and a 90% kill is only about three degrees. In general, for apricots and peaches, if they are just starting to bloom, damage starts at 25 degrees, full bloom is damaged at 27 degrees and if fruit is forming, it only takes 28 degrees. So there you are and now we'll just have to wait for another month to see what happens! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Transplant starter solutions

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. My mother was a gardener. I was out in the garden from my earliest memories. I loved helping my mother transplant cabbages and then later tomatoes and peppers. We always had to mix up starter solution and it was my job to put a cup of starter solution on each plant as mom got it planted. Starter solution can be very important to getting transplants off and going good IF it is done properly. Starter solution is simply a weak fertilizer solution usually high in phosphorus. If you get a special starter fertilizer it may even have root stimulators or hormones of some sort. But you don't have to use the special products, you can just use something like 10-20-10 fertilizer mixed lightly in water. Transplants, especially things like cabbage, are often going into cold soils. For some reason, cold soils don't let go of their phosphorus very easily so starter solutions can give an extra phosphorus boost even in high phosphorus soils. A cup of the starter solution can also help settle the soil in around the roots helping eliminate air voids and getting good soil to root contact. You need to be careful if mixing your own starter solutions. Nitrogen and potassium, the first and third number of the three numbers in fertilizer, are both salts. Too much of the salts can damage young plant's roots. So use a fertilizer with twice as much phosphorus as nitrogen like 5-10-5 or 10-20-10 or 11-15-11. Only mix two to three tablespoons of the granular fertilizer per gallon of water. Use warm water if possible and stir really good. Not all of the fertilizer will dissolve, but enough will to be effective. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.