

## Pruning Fruit Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. March and early April are the time that we traditionally prune fruit trees. Fruit tree pruning is equal parts science and art. There's certain basic things that you need to do based on how that species of fruit tree bears fruit. But trying to describe some of those important parts is like trying to describe how to paint like Davinci in two minutes on the radio. But fear not, we have an option! On Monday evening, March 16<sup>th</sup>, the Geary and Dickinson county extension offices are co-hosting a fruit tree pruning workshop. This will be held at 3335 Tulip Road. This is on the west side of the lake about 3/8 of a mile north of the Alida-Upland Church. If you need better directions than that, ask me! I'll be the designated pruner - they don't call me chopper Chuck for nothing! - and we'll be talking about apples and pears - which have handled fairly similarly, and then peaches as well. Peaches are handled far differently than apples and pears. I'll talk about where each species bears fruit, how to train a young tree, how to deal with a tree that hasn't been pruned for several years, if ever, and basic management needs that fruit trees have. We need to remember that because of our extremely variable climate, we can't be sure that we'll get fruit in any given year. But we still have to maintain and manage our fruit trees annually as if they are going to give us a fruit crop, just in case! So, that's Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m at 3335 Tulip Road. It'll last for about one hour, or until sundown when we can't see any longer. Give me a call if you need directions or have questions! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Cutting Back Ornamental Grasses

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Ornamental grasses are very popular in many home landscapes. What we once used to call pampas grass now can be one of dozens of different species. Some get quite tall, others are quite tidy and some are rather small. What they all have in common though is the need to be cut back each year. Many of us wait until now to do it, but we need to be getting going on it soon. There are many ways to go after these clumps of grass. Hedge shears can be used as can a circular blade on a weed whip. Even a chain saw can be used, but be sure to use the top of the bar, not the bottom so you don't pull in a lot of material and clog it up. General we want to cut these off 2 to 4 inches above the ground. Sometimes it is helpful to cut off the extra tall seed stalks first and then tie the remaining vegetation together with twine to keep it from scattering everywhere. If you find that the center of the clump is hollowing out, it is probably time to dig up the clump, separate it and reset the vigorous growth from the outer part of the ring. One of the best ways to deal with the old growth, if you live out in the country where it is legal to do so, is to burn it off. A few cautions on this from the voice of experience. Do not use fire if the plants are within about 15 feet of any evergreen. These grasses burn hot and fast and you can damage pines, cedars or spruces from the heat, or even catch them on fire. Make sure the wind speeds are under 10 mph and have a garden hose charged and ready before you light the first clump, and if you live in Geary county be sure to have a burn permit and call in first! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Keep Spring Fever in Check

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Starting late last week the weather finally got nice and the end of winter is now in sight. But even with several days of really nice weather ahead of us, I need to issue a few words of warning - keep that spring garden fever in check. Garden soil is still cold and even though it hasn't been a super wet winter, the soil may still be too wet to be working up. In fact if you have a lot of mulch on the soil, you may even find some spots of frost still in the ground. I'm willing to bet that this hasn't kept someone from planting some potatoes already, but it's a little bit early yet. Even for this early season crops, you need to be waiting another week or two. Remember, working wet soil creates problems that will haunt you the rest of the gardening season, so just be patient. Grass is just starting to green up so I do NOT want to hear any lawnmowers yet. Early mowing often results in mowing too low just so the blades are cutting something. Save the gas and wait for the grass to grow. Spring flowering shrubs should not be pruned until AFTER they bloom. Pruning before they bloom won't hurt the health of the plant, but you will be cutting off many of the flower buds that would have bloomed. If you have peach trees, make sure that you have sprayed them or spray them soon with a fungicide, not dormant oil, to control peach leaf curl. This is also a good time to prune fruit trees. You can prune them in April as well, but as those buds start to swell and get closer to blooming you are more likely to break the flower buds off and that reduces potential fruit yield for the year. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.