

Eliminating Unwanted Fruit

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Everybody wants the flowers of the ornamental flowering trees, but many people don't want the fruit. And it even goes on the same to shade trees. Elms, maples, ashes, sweet gum, even oaks in some instances. We want the shade, but all those darn seeds. Other than a timely freeze, there's not much that we can do about the seeds off all those trees like maples, elms and others. I wish there was, but there simply isn't. There is a product called Florel that is labeled for this purpose, but it's results have been sporadic and are very dependent on proper timing with blooming and even air temperature at time of treatment. Basically, I wouldn't spend the money unless you really want to experiment with it. With apples, and possibly with pears, we do have an option in using the insecticide carbaryl or Sevin. A strong dose of Sevin within the first 35 days after blooming can often cause a significant drop in apples and probably pears as well. The sooner after blooming you spray the better results you will have, but there should still be time. Mix two tablespoons of Sevin per gallon of water and thoroughly cover the tree. I would wait 7 to 10 days and then repeat the treatment. While most effective on flowering crabapples, well, apples in general, it is worth a try on ornamental pears as well. Judging by the pears in front of our office, it's going to be another banner year for fruit on the flowering pears. Just a word of warning, if you have a good fruit set on your eating apple trees, don't use straight Sevin for insect control until later on in the summer as they will cause drop on those too! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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Thinning Fruit

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When fruit trees started blooming as early as they did I was pretty pessimistic about getting a fruit crop. But it looks like some folks are going to get some fruit this year including peaches and apricots. One of the problems that many homeowners have though is that if there is a heavy fruit set, they don't take steps to reduce the fruit load and they wind up with lots of small fruit and branches that break. Here's the really hard thing for most home gardeners and home orchardists to do and that's to remove excess fruit on a tree. There is something inherently wrong, to many gardeners, with removing perfectly good small fruit early in the season. But if the fruit has set heavy, and the fruit isn't thinned, you will have a lot of small fruit that are really a pain to work with. The tree is going to produce a certain number of pounds of fruit and in all honesty, the tree would just as soon produce 1000 small apples as 400 big apples as there would be more seeds to spread its genes around! But you need to thin IF you have heavy fruit set. For apples and pears, the fruit needs to be 4 to 6 inches apart, or a better way to put it is 2 to 3 apples per foot of branch length. If the branch is 3 feet long, only have 6 to 9 apples or pears on it. They'll probably be in clusters and that's okay, just keep the clusters well separate. Using the same thought process now, peaches need to be 6 to 8 inches apart, plums and prunes 4 to 5 inches apart and apricots, 2 to 4 inches. Remember these are averages so adjust accordingly. Oh, and cherries we just don't worry about, Leave 'em all on! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

17 year cicadas

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Just about any time now in the next couple of weeks you are liable to hear an uncommon buzz out in the timber. We are all used to the cicadas that we hear every summer, right up until the first hard freezes silence the last ones. But once every 17 years we are privileged to experience the 17 year cicadas. 2015 is the year that we will have these noisy and bizarre creatures. Sometime the last half of May and on into June, these rascals will start emerging from the ground and calling. There are actually two separate species that have different calls, but they look very similar to each other. They are generally smaller than the typical and annual dog day cicadas. They have a black body, blood red beady eyes and orange veined and clear wings. The call is unmistakable and the more common species has a high pitched buzzing sometimes interspersed with ticks. The less common species will be more of a weeee whoa weeee whoa. The other thing is that they are loud. I went out into the timber in 1998, when they last occurred, with my sound meter and measured them at a solid 90 decibels. That's loud enough to leave your ears ringing if you are with them very long! It's kind of hard to believe that these started out in the summer of 1998 as a tiny larvae hatching out of an egg laid on a small branch in the tree. The tiny larvae hatched, fell to the ground, burrowed into the soil until it found a root and has been feeding and waiting until this spring. Once they come out, I'll organize a field trip to get people out where they are abundant so you can experience this awesome event! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

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