

Firewood Management

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It's getting that time of year when people are really starting to fire up their fireplaces and wood stoves so I always like to talk about some firewood management tips. We have many different kinds of firewood available to us and it is important to remember that pound for pound, all firewood has the same BTUs or heat units. The difference comes in that some species, like cottonwood or silver maple, needs a bigger piece of wood than, say oak, to weigh a pound. If you want to argue with me, grab a cup of coffee and stop by my office. First thing is to make sure that you are only burning dry, well seasoned wood. Wood that is still a bit wet or green can really contribute to creosote issues in your chimney. Do not stack wood physically touching your house or out buildings and also keep it off the ground. Wood in contact with the soil will result in termites and if the wood is also touching your house it can provide an easy path for a termite infestation in your home. Keep the wood covered with a tarp or under a roof in an outbuilding. Wood borers can get into firewood, especially things like locust, but it's harder for them to find it when it's tarped or under a roof. You also do not want to spray the firewood with an insecticide to keep insects out of it. The problem potentially becomes what happens to the insecticide when the wood is burned. There is a possibility of dangerous vapors being generated in the burning process and for that reason insecticides are not labeled for treating firewood. Keep it off the ground, keep it covered and you'll have fewer problems. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Asian Ladybird Beetles

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Well, I thought we might manage to avoid them this year, but recent warm and sunny afternoons have shattered that illusion. I'm talking about the Asian Multicolored Ladybugs or what we've started calling nowadays as just the Asian Ladybugs. As their name implies they are not native to Kansas but were imported in the 1970s to control insect pests. In their homeland of China, these ladybugs inhabit tall rocky cliffs in the winter, crawling into cracks in the rocks. In the absence of these rocky cliffs, they feel that the next best thing is our homes. Sadly, most of the ones that come into our homes die during the winter because of the dry air in our houses. They can leave stains on walls and drapes, but other than that, they are merely an annoyance. Oh, they do bite also - but in fact all ladybugs bite, these just seem to be more prone to doing so probably because of the salt on our skins. On warm sunny days in the fall and winter they tend to swarm on the sunny sides of houses, just like those lovely boxelder bugs do. They'll come into our homes and fly around the sunniest windows during the day and our lights at night. Inside the home, a vacuum sweeper may be your best defense. Make a periodic cleaning of the windows on days when they are active. Make sure the house is sealed up as tight as possible to keep them out and then spray the outside of the house, especially around the foundation, windows, doors, anywhere there are cracks, with one of the synthetic pyrethroids. While not eliminating all of them, this will help reduce the numbers. At least until next spring.

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Processing Horseradish

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There's not a lot of garden plants I haven't tried to grow. Salsify or vegetable oyster is one, and horseradish is another. Now, I love horseradish and once established being a perennial, you can harvest some and let some stay in the ground for following years. It is normally harvested or dug, after a hard freeze kills the foliage. Dig up the bigger roots and keep the smaller pencil sized ones to replant or give to friends to plant. To process horseradish, wash the roots, peel and cut into sections. The rest of this you may want to do in the garage or outdoors. The potency of horseradish, a cousin to wasabi by the way, is found in the vapors coming off the product, hence the warning to do this outdoors. Use a food processor or blender to chop the roots up along with a small amount of water and a couple of ice cubes. The bite of the horseradish starts to develop immediately on processing. The intensity of the horseradish can be adjusted by adding vinegar or lemon juice to stop the process. When you open the food processor, make sure it is facing away from you, preferably with the wind at your back blowing the vapors away! You add 2 to 3 tablespoons per cup of horseradish, plus ½ teaspoon of salt, to arrest the process. If you add the vinegar or lemon juice immediately after processing you will have a very mild horseradish. If you wait several minutes you will have a very strong horseradish, or perhaps a very VERY strong horseradish. Store the ground horseradish in a tightly sealed jar in the refrigerator until ready for use. Then enjoy it! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.