

Late Season nitrogen fertilization.

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When it comes to lawns in our area care of that lawn is very crucial and the top of that list, okay 2nd to the top after mowing tall, is proper fertilization. Depending on what level of management you want to give your lawn there are one or two critical times for fertilization of that fescue or bluegrass lawn and neither one of those times are in the spring. If you are going to fertilize your lawn one time a year, then anytime from Mid September through late November is the time to do it. If you are going to fertilize your lawn twice then September and again in November are the times to do it. In the fall, if the lawn isn't dormant from drought, it is busy developing a thicker fuller root system and building up the crowns of the plants. Fertilizing in the fall does not stimulate a lot of growth requiring more mowing. It goes into the development of those ever so important roots and crowns. Next spring, when the grass is starting to grow it will green up quicker and be thicker and fuller, assuming of course that you have been mowing it tall. If you focus your fertilization in the spring, it triggers far more top growth because that is what the plant is trying to do at that time anyway. So you wind up mowing more with out really helping the lawn get thicker with a fuller root system. Now, if you really want to mess up a fescue lawn, fertilize heavy in the spring, set the lawnmower down to about two inches and just keep mowing it. The fertilizer will stimulate the plant to grow, constant mowing removes nutrients and before long, you have no fescue lawn left! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Plenty of Time to Still Plant bulbs

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Well it is finally starting to cool off, now that we are into November. Shorter days and a lower angle of the sun have that effect. BUT, there is still plenty of time to plant spring flowering bulbs. The rule of thumb is that as long as the soil temperature is above 40 degrees you can plant these bulbs. You can plant when the soil is colder but it will delay flowering the first year. Last week soil temperature was still in the upper 50s to low 60s so we've got a lot of time left. The ground has been drying out because of the dry weather the past couple of months but that's okay also. If you haven't bought bulbs yet, start hitting the garden stores or the lawn and garden area of any store that has one. Often, if you aren't overly picky about what you get, you can find some great deals as stores try to move the last of the bulbs out. You want to make sure you plant the bulbs deep enough. We often run into problems when we don't plant bulbs deep enough in that they seem to run out of energy in a few years because the warmer soils cause them to multiply and crowd themselves out. Follow the directions on the package but if you are without directions, figure 2 to 3 times the size of the bulb is how deep you want to plant them. If your soils are kind of heavy mix in some peat moss, compost or well rotted manure into the bottom of the planting hole. You can also mix a good bulb fertilizer, like a 5-10-5 or a mix of blood and bone meal, into the bottom of the planting hole to give the bulb a good boost as it starts to root. Cover the bulbs up and if dry, give it a good slow soaking! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

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Putting tools away for winter

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Many of our better long handled garden tools have wooden handles. Wood is a natural product and over time the wood can start to deteriorate. As you are wrapping up the end of the gardening season, as many folks are right now, it's a good time to check these handles over and take some care of them. First of all I like to check the handle for splinters or rough spots. Smooth these up with sandpaper, then give the entire handle a good sanding to rough up the old finish. Then I want you to get a good quality exterior polyurethane type varnish and give the handle one or two coats. Don't drown the handle in the finish, but give it a good light coating. Once it's dried for several days, or until no longer tacky to the touch, lightly sand it with a super fine 400 grit sandpaper and give it a second coat. If you've got a well worn handle you may have to give it several coats repeating this same procedure. I prefer polyurethane over linseed oil as the linseed oil tends to attract dust. Once the handle is taken care of, you still aren't ready to put the tool away. And this next step goes for all hand tools, even those without wooden handles. I want you to clean all the dirt and debris off of all the metal parts. This may take a steel brush, steel wool or even some of the 400 or 600 grit sandpaper. Tighten anything that can be tightened. Take a file and touch up the blade. This may be a shovel, a hoe, pruning shears or lopping shears. Get that edge sharpened and ready for next year. Once all the metal is clean, get a lightweight oil and wipe the metal down to protect from rust. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.