

Perennial Garden Cleanup

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 us have perennial flowers and herbaceous plants in our gardens. These are anything without a woody stem, if you will, that dies back to the ground each winter and all new growth comes up the following year, from below the soil surface level. Some gardeners become a little bit OCD in the fall and try to clean up every bit of this plant growth after a freeze has stopped growth for the year. Often I would prefer to see the current year's growth be left alone until spring. That way, when we start to get those nice warm sunny late winter weekend days, and the gardener feels the need to go outside and do something, there is something to do which prevents the gardener from doing the wrong thing at the wrong time! So, many times, this excessive work in the fall is unnecessary. In some cases, say, ornamental grasses or pampas grass, the old growth can become a fire hazard if it is close to the house, so cutting it down is a good idea. But away from buildings, there is no need to cut it down until next spring. Some of these perennials, after the frost, continue to give form and color to the home landscape, so leaving them is fine. Other times, these standing perennial plants will help to trap leaves or snow which can provide protection to somewhat tender roots and crowns, or the snow that is trapped will melt slowly at some point, helping to recharge soil moisture. In the case of peonies, that old growth needs to come out, but it can be done now, OR it can wait until next spring. So if you'd rather stay inside on these autumnal Saturdays and watch some football, it's okay! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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Winterizing Roses

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Some rose varieties, particularly hybrid tea roses, evolved in a somewhat warmer climate than what we have here in Kansas. Additionally, while some varieties of hybrid teas have pretty good winter hardiness, others don't. So if you want to make sure that they are around next year, you'd better mulch them down. Keep in mind that it is very normal to have winter dieback in most rose varieties, so we'll often see that and we always need to plan on pruning our roses each spring to remove this dead growth. We often want to prune our hybrid tea roses down pretty severely in the spring because that's how we generate new vigorous growth to produce those huge blossoms that we grow hybrid tea roses for. Hybrid teas are invariably also grafted. I'm telling you all this to make the point that what you want to protect on those hybrid tea roses is only the bottom 8 to 10 inches of the plant. Wait until we've had a couple of good hard freezes to stop the rose from growing. Trim back any canes over about 36 inches tall and then if there are a lot of these, tie them together so they don't go whipping around in winter winds. Then bring in compost or soil and make a mound over the bottom of the plant 8 to 10 inches high. Do that by the end of November. Then, later, if you want, you can add another layer, maybe 4 to 6 inches deep, of straw or leaves and then more soil on top of that to hold it in place. Bring this soil in from outside the rose planting area. If you scrape up soil from between the plants, you may expose tender roots or reduce the amount of soil protecting those roots. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Dealing with honeysuckle

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. People seem to be noticing far more of a certain plant this fall. The plant is a shrub that is sometimes seen in yards, sometimes out in the wild. It can be a few feet tall up to ten feet tall, right now still has leaves, and often is loaded with bright red berries. If you break off a larger branch you will also often notice that it has a hollow stem. This plant is honeysuckle, sometimes just called bush honeysuckle but also Amur or Tartarian Honeysuckle. While we do have native honeysuckles, these are vining plants. This bushy honeysuckle was used as a landscape and wildlife plant for years, but we now recognize that it is a horribly invasive plant that is causing chaos in our woodland settings. It leafs out earlier in the spring than many native plants and stays green and holds its leaves later in the fall. The real challenge is that it is a prolific seed producer and birds love those bright red berries, which they eat and then "plant" if you will, all over the place. In woodland settings, this plant can crowd out all other plants. I encourage homeowners that have this shrub in their landscape to remove it and replace it with better options - call me for some ideas. If you have native woodlands, be on the lookout for it and start attacking it. If all other plants around it are dormant this fall and it still has green leaves, you can spray it with glyphosate aka Roundup. In many cases you may have to cut it off at the ground and treat the freshly cut stump with Tordon, or perhaps better if desirable plants are around, a triclopyr based stump killer or concentrated glyphosate of at least 20% active ingredient. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.