

Garden Spiders

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If there is one thing that runs a close second to snakes for creatures that people love to hate, it has to be spiders. I suspect that like snakes, spiders are quiet, they startle you, a very few of the species are venomous (not poisonous, there is a difference!) and they always seem to be around when we don't expect them. Well, let me just tell you that we are going to have a LOT of spider from now until we've had several good hard freezes. Spiders live on insects. Wet weather produces lots of insect. Lots of insects leads to lots of things that live on insects. Spider's can adjust their populations quickly to good food conditions OR you will wind up with higher survival of the ones that hatched this spring. Most spiders stay under the radar screen and we rarely even know they are around except for the ones that wander into our house, OR the huge ones that make their webs in your garden or from your trees. We have two fairly common what we call garden spiders. These are the ones that make the big ornate web, are fairly brightly colored and seem to be huge. We also have some slightly smaller orb weavers that are more mundane brown colors. Anyway, while they may startle you and freak you out, they are very beneficial and should be left alone. They don't have many weeks of life ahead of them. They'll be busy laying a sack full of eggs and eating grasshoppers or anything else that get's caught in their web before cold weather slows them down and freezing weather killss them. Until that time, walk slowly and carefully in the garden and enjoy nature's wonder! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Sweet Potatoes and Ornamental Sweet Potatoes

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Reblooming Christmas and Thanksgiving Cactus

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When I was a kid growing up, my great Aunt had a huge Christmas cactus on her back porch that always bloomed profusely every year. She gave me a start of that plant and it never bloomed for me. My mom took the cactus from me and had it blooming by the next fall. Go figure! If you have one of those Christmas or Thanksgiving cactus, different species, but closely related, there are certain physiological requirements that the plant must have before it will bloom. I think my Aunts back porch was perfect. Flowering for these will not occur unless induced by temperature and/or light. If the plant is held at a fairly constant 50 to 55 degrees, flowering will occur regardless of day length, but the flowering may be sporadic and not uniform. So, if you can subject your plants to uninterrupted nights longer than 12 hours AND temperatures between 59 and 69 degrees for 25 consecutive nights you will initiate flower production and it will be much better than using temperature only. Starting on the first day of autumn we will have nights of 12 hours or longer which will work as long as we don't get room light. A good way to make sure that this is happening is to cover the plant with an aluminum foil lined box. Cover the plant at 6 in the evening, uncover it at 7. Keep it cool and do this for 25 days and then you can bring it back to normal conditions. If you do this you should soon see buds starting to form and then it will take 9 to 10 weeks for the flowers to fully form and start to bloom. Keep these in indirect sunlight and the soil moist but not soggy. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.