

Time to apply crabgrass preventers

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Every homeowner that I ever talk to is always very concerned about crabgrass. If you mention lawn weed control it's a toss up of whether homeowners will mention crabgrass or dandelions first. While crabgrass seems to be what many homeowners talk about, there's actually a whole host of summertime lawn weeds that can be managed or at least suppressed with crabgrass preventer type of herbicides. Before I go any further I have to say though that the best way to control most any lawn weed is through management practices that keep a lawn thick and mowed tall - in fact mowing tall is necessary to keep a lawn thick. But that leaves the other 80% of us to deal with crabgrass and other summertime weeds. I have two top choices for crabgrass preventers, Dimension and Barricade. The active ingredients in these are dithiopyr in Dimension and prodiamine in Barricade. Both product can give true season long control. Barricade will actually last a little longer, but in many ways I prefer Dimension. Dimension can be used earlier on new seedings of turfgrass and it can also be applied later and control crabgrass when it is at the 1 to 2 leaf stage. BUT I'd prefer not to do that! Most years our crabgrass is going to start germinating around May 1st, this year maybe a little earlier. So it becomes important to get your crabgrass preventer applied very soon so that you can get it watered in and activated before we hit that crabgrass germination date. Generally you need about a half inch of rain or irrigation to really get your crabgrass preventers activated! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Mowing height of lawns

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Some people just can't wait to get the lawn mower fired up and get out on the turf mowing. I've never fully understood that mind set! Some people get in such a hurry that they set their lawn mower much lower than they really should just so that they can see that they've actually been mowing something. If your lawn is Kentucky Bluegrass or tall fescue, which most are, then mowing height becomes very critical. Leaves are the food factory for the grass plant. The leaves of these grasses are very upright, unlike the more horizontal leaves of buffalo or Bermuda grass. When you consistently mow fescue or bluegrass short you are taking away the food that the plant needs to stay thick and lush. The plants start to loose size and mass and before long you have a clumpy stand of grass with bare soil in between. Bare soil is where weeds start because many of these weedy species need sunlight for the seed to germinate. When I talk to people about mowing tall I always get the response that they want to mow short so they don't have to mow as often. If you follow the rule of never taking off more than 1/3 the length of the grass blade you'll understand why you can mow less by mowing taller. Now, IF you want to mow short once in the spring to get some of that dead grass removed, then set your mower down no more than 1/2 inch. Mowers, for all of our lawn grasses, should be set at 3 to 3 1/2 inches tall. Under very high maintenance MAYBE 2 1/2 inches tall, but I'd really prefer 3. Go ahead and cut it a little shorter once, but don't scalp it because that'll be the start of your weeds! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Snakes

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. In recent weeks I received two phone calls from folks concerned because of seeing an abundance of snakes, okay, I'll be blunt a LOT of snakes, on their property all at once. So, I think we can all agree that snakes rank pretty low on the list of things that people want to pick up and cuddle with. In fact the presence of snakes has been known to occasionally send someone screaming in fear in the other direction. Some people will even go out of their way to run over, chop up or otherwise destroy snakes, actions I simply can not condone as snakes are extremely beneficial to our lives, believe it or not. What these individuals had witnessed was the departure of snakes from their overwintering areas which are known as hibernaculum. Snakes gather in certain areas and spend the winter in a large mass that would give terminal nightmares to anyone who doesn't like snakes. When the weather warms, the snakes leave and for a day or two, locations close to the hibernaculum will appear to be over run with snakes as they slowly move back out to their summering areas. Leave the snakes alone and they will leave the area. People often ask me about some spray or potion that they can put around their property to keep snakes away. While there are a couple of products that have shown some promise of working, it's best to remember that they could also effectively keep a snake inside the magic perimeter also thereby defeating the intent. You are better off to simply keep areas tidy and trimmed and when you encounter a snake, just let it go on it's way and let it live!

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