

## Naked Ladies

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I remember as a young teenager riding with my mother driving through a town only to hear her comment, "oh, look at the naked ladies in that yard." I thought I was going to get a whipping trying to see what she was talking about. That was my first experience with surprise lilies, or magic lilies or resurrection lily, a.k.a. naked ladies. Technically, they are in the genus *Lycoris* and are in the amaryllis family. If you start searching on the internet you will find a lot of different species that carry the name surprise lily, but the one that we see growing around here is *Lycoris squamigera*. The plant starts the year producing a plethora of long flat leaves. About mid summer these all die back and you may wonder what is going on. Then, fairly suddenly, this two foot tall flower stalk explodes out of the ground producing the large pinkish blossoms. When they get through blooming, the flower stalk can be cut back to the ground. If you wish to move or divide surprise lilies, late summer or early fall, after blooming but before we start having freezing weather, is the time to do it. Surprise lilies multiply readily and while they can go years with little attention, digging them and dividing them about every five years is recommended. When you dig them, replant all the bulbs, even the little ones. The smallest bulbs may not bloom for a few years, but eventually they will. A little general garden fertilizer can be sprinkled around the plants when the leaves first emerge in the spring. These leaves are important as they produce all the energy stored in the bulb to create the blooms! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Grass in the Gutter

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 been a lot of discussion lately, in the news and on social media, of grass clippings on the street and in the gutter. Now, we're not talking about just a little bit in these cases. I mean we're all guilty of getting a few grass clippings in the street when we mow. But what we're talking about here is when lawns are mowed in a very specific manner so that all the grass clippings wind up on the street or sidewalks and driveways are swept or blown so all of the debris winds up in the street. First of all, this is against the law in most cities including Junction City. But secondly, it is unsightly and creates all sorts of environmental consequences on down stream. Additionally, those grass clippings contain a lot of nutrients. You should be using a mulching mower, mowing regularly and putting those clippings right back down on the lawn so the nutrients can be recycled. If you are making windrows when you mow, and feel the need to get them off your lawn, then first of all you aren't mowing often enough and secondly, rake them up and compost them. All that organic matter that winds up in the street goes down the storm sewer. Large masses of vegetation can plug things up. Even if they don't plug things up that organic matter usually winds up in water someplace. Pesticides can wash into the water. But the clippings themselves use up oxygen when they decompose which can reduce the amount of oxygen for aquatic organisms. The nutrients also move into the water leading to algae blooms and other issues. So, please, keep your grass clippings out of the street. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Peony Care

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've had several peony samples brought in to my office the past week or so. In each case they were covered with a whitish powder like they were next to a really dusty road. This is powdery mildew, a fungus disease that looks far worse than it really is. We have been seeing more of this in recent years but most of it should be late enough in the season as to not be an issue. If you apply fungicides like Immunox or propiconazole prior to the disease showing up you can stop it. However I wouldn't worry too much about it. You can reduce the incidence of powdery mildew and peony leaf spot, sometimes called peony measles, through sanitation and insuring good air movement. Which brings to the question that everyone seems to have at this time of year. How soon can I cut down my peonies? Well, you can do it anytime now. By late August peonies have stored up adequate food supplies in the roots for next year's growth. You don't HAVE to do it right now, but you can do it. Normally I won't cut mine back until late September or October, often waiting until there's been a hard freeze. Here's the important thing to remember though. DO NOT mow them off with your lawn mower. Both of the diseases I mentioned earlier are spread to the plants from spores on previous year's growth. Cut the plants off at the base with hand pruners or even a hedge trimmer. Haul all the material to a burn pile or to the trash, NOT a compost pile. Get all those diseased leaves out of the area. Then take a garden rake and rake some of the soil off the crowns to keep the soil from getting too deep. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Keeping Up With Mowing

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 is late summer, and it is raining AND it has cooled off from this beastly hot days, it can become a real challenge to keep up with the mowing. It's bad enough when the fescue is growing so fast, but right now that probably isn't the issue like it is in April and May. What I'm seeing get way ahead of homeowners is the crabgrass and foxtail. Not only are these grasses growing rapidly right now, the leaf blades are very lush, meaning high water content, and this then is a real problem as it clogs up lawn mowers, leaves windrows and is just basically a real bother to deal with. It is important that you keep mowing tall. Don't go setting the mower low thinking you won't need to mow as often. This honestly just makes the problem worse. In the long haul you need to get the crabgrass under control and that is going to take a while including taller mowing, thickening the lawn and then applying crabgrass preventer next spring. What you can do for now is to spray the parts of your yard that have the heaviest foxtail and crabgrass infestation with Bayer Advanced's Crabgrass Killer or Bermudagrass Control for Lawns. Same exact product just different labels. You attach the bottle to your garden hose, turn on the water and spray. Simple and no mixing. Do this about two days before you'd be mowing so that the grasses have some decent growth. This herbicide stops the foxtail and crabgrass from growing pretty quickly, although it looks like nothing is happening. Then when you mow the next time you should find that the annual grasses are back in just two days! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Chiggers, still!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Normally by the latter half of August, chiggers have pretty well faded to a non-issue. But no, no, not this year! I'm still getting way more chigger bites than anyone wants to have. I think we can thank the weather for them hanging on late into the season this year. Chiggers are poorly misunderstood by most folks. They are an immature stage of a mite. For that one life stage they need to have a meal from a mammal host. The rest of their lives they will feed on insects and other mites. The lush vegetation and temperatures have allowed multiple generations of these rascals to be active this year. Chiggers do not burrow under the skin, they don't suck blood, they don't transmit diseases, at least here in Kansas they don't. They love to get under tight fitting clothing, mainly from the waist down. They are so small they can just go right through the weave of denim. If possible they'll grab on to a hair follicle, stick their mouthpart into your skin and then inject their saliva. Their saliva breaks down the cell contents which they then suck up as food. If left alone they will feed for 2 to 4 days. A vigorous washing soon after coming inside will usually dislodge them. It often takes them an hour or two to settle in and start feeding, but even a brief feeding exposure will probably cause you to start itching. Most researchers feel that the itching is an allergic reaction caused by the release of histamines when the cell contents are being broken down by the saliva. Use the standard anti-itch products and possibly antihistamines. If you have severe reactions get in to visit with your doctor! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.