

Landscapes aren't meant to last forever

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We have a problem here in Kansas. We plant a tree, we nurse it along, and then we expect it to last forever. The same thing goes for our landscapes. We plant, or hire someone to plant, a variety of trees and shrubs in a pleasing assemblage in our yard. And then we pretty much forget about them. A landscape is a growing, living and aging entity. Some of the plants have the ability to outlive you, if you don't mess them up. Others are going to last 20 or so years and then will start to go downhill and will need to be replaced. I've seen far too many commercial firms plant landscapes that were instantly full aged looking, but then the homeowners weren't instructed, or simply chose not to, maintain that landscape through proper pruning. All of a sudden, or so it seems, the landscape is over grown and over crowded. Many plants, especially junipers, can not be drastically reduced in size. That's just not how they grow. If you don't conduct annual pruning on some of these plants, they'll get oversized and then you have no choice but to remove them and replace them. Mid to late winter is a good time to evaluate your landscape. Deciduous trees have no leaves and you can really look at their structure and condition. Look for excessive limb growth, damage that may have been hidden with leaves or evidence of rot and decay indicating declining health. Then decide if the tree or shrub can be pruned and saved, or if it's time to remove it and move on to the next phase of the landscape. Take a look at your landscape and if you have questions, let me know! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Growing your own fruit trees

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There isn't a year that goes by that someone doesn't contact me wanting to plant some apple seeds, or peach pit or some seed from some fruit that they had eaten that was just wonderful. I can certainly understand the desire to have more of that variety of fruit. Come on, nothing is better than fresh, ripened on the tree fruit. But here is where it gets tricky. The most popular tree fruits are basically cross pollinated. They depend on insects, mainly bees, to move pollen around. While some individual varieties and certain species of fruits are self fruitful, they do better with bees around to pollinate them. This means that the apple or pear or peach that that you ate was probably pollinated by bees that visited other trees. While source of pollen will not affect how the fruit will taste, it does mean that growing out another tree from a seed from that fruit, is going to be a crossbred. The second complication in your plan is that virtually all fruit trees growing today are cloned, or grafted. When a new superior or improved variety is developed, they use that one tree to develop growth that is grafted onto root stock. It is not sexually reproduced from seed like vegetables are. One good tree was found and it provided the twigs (or scions) that were grafted. You essentially have a 1 in 80,000 chance that the fruit you get from the tree you grew from that seed is going to taste as good or better than the parent fruit. There's also the 7 to 10 year waiting period to get the seedling old enough to bear fruit, then you have a full size tree instead of a dwarf... just go buy another apple! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

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Okay Gardeners you can start a few transplants

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I'm sure that in someone's house nearby there are already tomatoes growing from seed. Good luck with that! Serious gardeners though know that they are still nearly two months away from starting tomatoes or peppers from seed. BUT if you really want to get started, you can now start your cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli and lettuce transplants from seed. We're going to normally put these transplants out in our garden the first of April. From germination up to having the proper size transplants, these are all going to take right at 8 weeks to get there. When starting transplants, I like to go to a nursery and get some flats with inserts. A good size is 18 or 24 cells per flat. Also get a good potting soil. DO NOT try to use dirt in these, it's a recipe for disaster. Fill the flats with potting soil, firm it up and put 2 or 3 seeds in each cell, about 1/4 inch deep. Carefully water them down and cover them with clear plastic wrap to help hold moisture in, then put in a warm place. Once you start to see seedlings emerge, get the plastic wrap off and get the flats under bright artificial light with the lights as close to the seedlings as you can. Before the seedlings get very big you will need to thin them down to one plant per cell. This tends to be the hardest thing for gardeners to do - pull up a growing plant. But it's necessary. Keep bright lights on the plants (sunlight in your house isn't going to be enough) with the bulbs literally within an inch or so of the top leaves. If you need information on making a light frame for this purpose, give me a call at the extension office as it's simple and very beneficial. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK,

I'm Chuck Otte.