

Squash Bugs, round 2

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I want to follow up last week's discussion of squash bugs with a discussion of squash bug control insecticides. There are some very big differences on insecticide of choice based on the size and age of the squash bugs! First of all understand that squash bugs have an incomplete metamorphosis. Young squash bugs look quite similar to adults only they are smaller and don't have fully developed wings. Young nymphs are going to be fairly small, old nymphs will be fairly close to the size of adults, and adults will have fully developed wings. What we have found is that for young and old nymphs the product spinosad was superior to all other products. Spinosad is sold under several brand names including Fertilome borer, bagworm, leafminer and tent caterpillar spray and Bonide Captain Jack's dead bug brew as well as others. Read the label and look for spinosad that looks like spinosad. Unfortunately, spinosad did poorly against adult squash bugs. Spinosad is a natural control product for those wanting to go a more organic approach. Permethrin was moderately effective against young and old nymphs but also didn't fare well against adults. Sevin was mediocre at best at all stages of growth. For adults, cyfluthrin, found in Bayer Vegetable and Garden Insect spray and cyhalothrin, found in Bonide Beetle Killer and spectracide tri-az-i-cide were most effective. In general though, adults are harder to kill than nymphs so don't wait to start treatment. Spray upper and lower leaf surfaces thoroughly, early morning is best. Treat once a week! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Why you don't mow short

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The biggest problem that I regularly see with lawn management is grass being mowed too short. I won't even begin to name names of lawns that I've seen mowed too short, but when I visit with homeowners that are having lawn problems, a mower set too short is a common thread throughout! Our traditional lawn grasses, bluegrass and tall fescue, have a very upright leaf blade. To have enough photosynthetically active material to produce food, they need to be left fairly long. Additionally, tall fescue is a bunch grass. We simply try to keep the bunches close enough together so it looks like a sod. Longer leaf blades keep the soil between clumps shaded so that sunlight doesn't get to the ground. This is critical as many weeds and weedy grass seeds need sunlight to germinate. Patches of bare soil will be filled in by mother nature with something. If you continue to mow short, the desirable grasses become weaker and weaker from lack of food and as the plants become weaker, the lawn becomes invaded by more and more weeds and weedy grasses. It becomes a vicious cycle that doesn't end well. There is also a misconception that if you mow short you can mow less often. This is also self defeating. The proper rule is to never take off more than 1/3 the total height of the grass. If you are mowing short, the grass can't grow as tall before you have to mow it again. Taller grass can grow longer, and taller, before reaching that 1/3 rule. So do your lawn and you a favor, raise the mower as high as it will go and keep your lawn mowed tall! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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Lawn Dormancy

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 comes to lawn grasses, we really do live in no-man's land. The warm season grasses grow well in the summer but they green up late and go dormant early. The cool season grasses grow great in spring and fall, but if we have hot weather in June, July and August, they will want to go dormant unless we keep them well watered or have regular rainfall. Many homeowners, myself included, will just let our lawns go dormant when it turns off hot and dry. This is okay as long as dormancy doesn't turn to dead grass. Most of our lawns are bluegrass or tall fescue. Bluegrass will go dormant sooner than fescue, but it will also survive longer periods of dormancy better than tall fescue. Tall fescue will try to keep growing longer before it goes dormant. But once it goes dormant, and hot and/or dry weather continues it becomes necessary to give fescue a deep soaking every 3 to 4 weeks to keep the crowns of the plant from dehydrating. Basically, in the absence of significant rainfall (at least a half inch of rain) ½ to 1 inch of irrigation is needed to keep the crowns hydrated. In an extended drought, 1 inch of irrigation will cause just a slight greening of the turf. More than an inch along with cooler weather will bring fescue out of dormancy as we saw before July 4th. If you are letting turf go dormant you also want to avoid stressing it. Dormant grass crowns are more likely to be damaged by heavy foot traffic or riding lawn mower traffic and especially larger vehicles. Once the lawn goes dormant, take the approach of "Fragile - handle with care".

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Pulling Onions

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I was judging garden crops at a fair recently.

There were several nice plates of onions and other plates that had onions that were not properly processed for long after harvest life. The hot dry weather in June really shut down my garlic and while onions aren't quite as heat sensitive, it is time to be harvesting onions anyway. Onions are generally ready to harvest when about half the plants have tops that have fallen over. A lot of old timers would even, walk down the onion tops once the first ones started to fall over to hasten the process along. Once the tops are falling over though, you don't want to wait too long to get the onions harvested as they will sunburn if left in the ground too long. The trick to getting good storage life of onions is to get that neck dried down and this was the problem I was seeing in the onions at the county fair I was judging. Once you have the onions out of the ground, move them to a well ventilated but shaded area. We always put our onions on window screens in the garage. Other times I've seen people tie the tops together tightly and hang them in a garage or out building. Obviously larger necked onions are going to take longer to get that neck dried down than smaller necked types like Bermuda onions. Once that neck is well dried, cut the tops to 2 to 3 inches in length, rub the dried up roots off the bottom and store in a cool dry location. Do not put them into plastic bags as they lack the circulation needed to maintain good storage. Mesh bags are a much better choice. If you store them in baskets or boxes, don't layer them too deep. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Killing Bermudagrass

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Bermudagrass, depending on your point of view, is either a great turfgrass for hot sunny locations, or the worst scourge of lawns since crabgrass. Bermudagrass is a warm season grass that spreads readily and rapidly by above ground runners, and below ground rhizomes. Once it is established, it will creep and crawl into any area that is in full sunlight. Because of those rhizomes and runners, it can not be killed by tillage, it can only be killed by herbicides. If you have Bermudagrass in your yard and want to get rid of it to plant fescue or bluegrass, you need to start the process now. Before you start though look at your neighbor's yards. If they are full of Bermudagrass, then you may just want to forget it as their Bermuda will keep trying to invade the edges of your lawn. Anyway, you need to use a product that contains glyphosate. It is sold under many different names including Round-up, Kleen-up, Kilzall, Kleeraway and others. Make sure it ONLY contains glyphosate and nothing else. If it hasn't rained recently, water the lawn and get that Bermuda growing really good and then spray it with a 2% solution. Wait 3 to 4 weeks, mow the lawn as low as you can and water the lawn good again, if it hasn't been raining. This will make it easier to see where the Bermuda is still alive and make it easier to get the herbicide onto the green Bermudagrass. Wait another two weeks and repeat the process. Then you can till up the lawn and replant your cool season grass in early September. You may want to soil test to see if you need to add fertilizer or soil pH amendments. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

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