

Gardening Tips for June 6 - 12, 2016

Late spring gardening

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Amazingly we are into the first full week of June. The soil and air are warming up and drying out a little bit, thank goodness. We are getting close to closing the book on spring gardening which comes about a month before we open the book on fall gardening. We can continue to plant snap and lima beans for about another week - probably need to plant the last round of those no later than June 10th. Likewise, you can continue plantings of sweet corn almost to the end of June. Early June is also a good time to plant sweet potatoes. This heat loving crop really needs to wait until the soil has warmed up and it finally has! Lastly, Winter squash can be planted anytime this month. We try to time this so it is getting ripe in September and October. All the rain we had the end of May created some really soggy soils which usually results in loss of nitrogen. Sidedressing the crops that are up and growing right now would be a good idea. Now's also a good time to get busy mulching your garden. The soils have warmed and they are wet so applying mulch now will help keep the soils from getting too hot and also help conserve soil moisture. You can use grass clippings BUT I prefer to have those clippings dried down first and then only apply a couple inches worth. If you apply wet clippings they will often mold and form an impenetrable layer that's hard as a rock that won't let water pass through. Let them dry, turning them daily, and you won't have this problem. I also would not use grass clippings for the first two mowings after herbicide application. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Lawns - summer weeds - slow release nitrogen - thatch control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Once we hit June 1st, even though we aren't to the official start of summer, we tend to take a more summer approach to our lawns. If you have a high maintenance lawn, as in you irrigate your lawn and especially if you bag your clippings, then you probably need to make a light summer application of nitrogen. I really hate to see lawns bagged because you remove so many valuable nutrients in those clippings. I'd like to see a primarily slow release nitrogen source used, but often you can't find homeowner fertilizer with more than about 20% slow release nitrogen. Regardless, if your lawn is going kind of light green, it's usually a sign that you need to apply some nitrogen. If you have thin areas of the lawn, and especially along curbs, sidewalks and driveways, be on the lookout for weeds breaking through after all this rain. If you see lots of little grassy type plants, you are probably looking at crabgrass or foxtail. Don't let these weedy grasses get too big, hit them with one of the post emerge crabgrass products now. Some of these products work well on larger crabgrass, but others, like quinclorac are best on small crabgrass so treat while the grasses are still small. Look for something labeled as crabgrass control or crabgrass killer. Finally, IF you have a zoysia or bermudagrass lawn that is getting quite thatchy, June is the time to power rake, vertical slice or core aerate. Bad thatch problems in these warm season lawns needs to be dealt with over two to three years. You can't effectively take care of it in just one year. Then don't over fertilize or overwater in the future! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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Biological or Organic Bagworm controls

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I wanted to follow up last week's discussion about bagworms with some thoughts on organic or biological control. One of the reasons that bagworms can get so out of hand is because they don't have a lot of natural enemies. They are fairly well protected inside those little bags that they haul around all the time. A few bird species have occasionally figured out how to get the little morsel out of the bag. I've seen wheel or assassin bugs sometimes getting them, but other than those, they don't really have a lot of natural enemies. In the off season, you can spend time picking the brown bags off the tree to remove the egg cases left inside the female bags, but it's too late for that this time of year. You can pick off the active bags and if you see just a few, that is a possibility. But early in the season those bags can be tricky to see, but they are out there already. There are a couple of sprays that qualify as natural or organic. Bt or bacillus thuringiensis can be used. It is important to start spraying early and apply several applications at ten day intervals. I've heard varied results from this approach so be ready to switch to something else in late June if you aren't controlling the bagworms. A better choice would be the natural product spinosad, which on the label looks like spin-o-sad. This is a natural substance made by a soil bacterium that is a very effective insecticide and possibly one of the best products to use against bagworms. It is even effective on large bagworms as long as they are still feeding. Spinosad is found in several products, you just have to read the labels closely. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK,

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Mushrooms

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With wet weather and warm weather come not only mosquitoes, but also mushrooms. You can call them toadstools, you can call them mushrooms, but it doesn't matter. They are the fruiting body of a fungus that is usually a wood decay organism often growing underground. A mushroom is to the fungus what an apple is to an apple tree. It contains the seed to create offspring. Mushrooms develop rapidly, often from deep underground, when temperature and moisture conditions are right. The fungal spores released from the mushroom need warm moist conditions to survive and germinate so the fungus senses when those conditions come along and quickly develop those mushrooms to take advantage of those situations. Some mushrooms are quite tasty, some are quite un-tasty, and some are poisonous even deadly poisonous. DO NOT bring me your mushrooms to find out if they are edible as I am not an expert! Often homeowners get upset when mushrooms show up in their yards. They often arise from a decay fungus working on an old stump or the large roots left when a tree died and was removed. In the long run, the fungus is doing us a favor as it break's down the old wood and recycles the nutrients. Unfortunately there is nothing you can spray or do to stop mushrooms from showing up. All you can do is physically remove them when they do appear. The wetter and warmer it is the more you are liable to see and different species will show up throughout the summer when the conditions are right. Pluck them or kick them, and just move on! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Sandbur control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Sandburs are an all too common pain in the grass, I said grass, with a G. Unfortunately, by the time many homeowners become aware of them, the nasty sharp spiny seeds have already been formed and there isn't much you can do. Now, when I'm talking about sandburs I'm talking about the plant that looks like a grass and has the spiny burs up on the stalk. The plant with little yellow flowers that grows flat and spreads out is puncturevine and we'll talk about that one next week. Sandburs don't grow in thick stands of grass. They grow in hot areas with thin or no grass stand often, but not always, in sandy areas, hot spots, areas along curbs, sidewalks and driveways. It is an annual plant that sprouts and grows from seed every spring. Where you had sandburs last year, you will likely have sandburs again this year. Crabgrass preventers can reduce the population but not eliminate. The seeds are now starting to sprout and grow. They are small little plants and easily overlooked. But since you had them last year you assume you have them this year. Fortunately, the crabgrass killers like quinclorac and fenoxaprop-p-ethyl, read the fine print, work very well on small sandburs. Because sandburs will sprout and grow well into August, I would plan on treating the areas that have had sandburs in past years, about once a month into August. If it gets to mid to late summer and you suddenly find you have sandburs going to seed, all you can do is put on heavy gloves and start pulling them. Place them in a bucket and then get rid of them in the trash or a burn pile. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.