

Tomato Woes

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Over 70% of all vegetable gardens in America raise tomatoes. They are, head and shoulders more popular than any other vegetable. Even people that don't have a garden may still have a couple of tomato plants in pots. Tomatoes are warm weather plants. They like it hot. If tomatoes get cold shocked they can literally turn blue or purplish and can be stunted for quite some time. Severe cold shock will push the plants from being reproductive to being vegetative thereby delaying your plans of having the first tomatoes on the block. A lot of people tend to get in a hurry getting tomatoes in the ground. Or, as in this year, they plant them at about the right time, but then the weather turns cold. Given the kind of weather we had last week, the tomatoes had quite a shock and may still not be looking too great. When tomatoes are shocked like this you have to be careful not to overwater or try to get them going with too much fertilizer. You just have to wait until the weather warms up and the soil warms up. Don't let them get dry, but be careful how much you water them. Wait until they are showing significant growth again before fertilizing. If you had already put your straw mulch down around the plants, pull it up and bare the soil so it can absorb the sunlight and get the soil warmed back up. If you are still dead set on having early tomatoes, go buy a couple more tomato plants and put them in pots where you can keep them in a sunny warm place. But otherwise you just need to be patient and wait for the weather to straighten back out and the tomatoes will start growing! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Yellow Nutsedge in Lawns

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Not all things that look like a grass in our lawns, is really a grass. There is a very large group of grass like plants called sedges that will invade our lawns. Once you get your hands on a sedge plant you can tell very quickly that it isn't a grass. Sedges have three sided stems. The stems are very angular with very pronounced edges, hence the old phrase, sedges have edges. The leaves come off the plant at three distinct angles, not the two that we usually see in grasses. Another common name for sedges is nutsedge. This name comes from their growth habit of producing small tubers on the roots. These little nut like growths will lie dormant until the root system is disturbed, as in if you try to pull it up. When the root system is disturbed, these little tubers break dormancy and establish a new plant, often giving you two or three sedge plants where there was just one. You can control sedges through constant pulling, but be prepared for a multi year project. There are some herbicides that do an effective job of killing the plant and the tubers. Sedgehammer (great marketing name by the way) is one of these - as is Hi-Yield brand Nutsedge killer. These products will not hurt the lawn grasses. You need to spray at the 3 to 8 leaf stage for optimal control. In general, for our part of Kansas, anytime in late May up until about the start of summer, June 21st, would be the recommended treatment time. Spraying later than that may stimulate tubers to start growing instead of controlling them. Use a spreader sticker to enhance control and follow all label directions. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Sycamore anthracnose

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Anthracnose and sycamores have been together for ever. The disease overwinters on small branches that were killed last year by the disease. When we have wet weather as the foliage is coming out, the leaves and small branches become infected, turn brown, die and the leaves fall off. In some cases, like this year, you can expect nearly all the leaves to be infected and fall off. But then new leaves will come out and the tree will look fine by late June. New buds behind the branch tips that were killed will start growing and the tree branches will continue to grow. Quite often you will notice that sycamore branches are somewhat crooked for this reason. Anthracnose is not fatal to sycamores and no treatment is necessary. Small trees can be treated but it has to be done prior to the infection period. Once the infection occurs, the sick leaves can not be cured.

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