

Rainy Weather Turf

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It seems to be hard enough in the spring to stay caught up with the lawn mowing as it is. So you throw in a string of wet days and it only becomes more challenging. There are several things that homeowners need to keep in mind when they are mowing lawns. First of all, keep mowing at the proper height which for most of our lawn grasses is 3 to 3½ inches tall. Also keep in mind that while your lawnmower may have numerical markings on mower height, these may very well NOT be the height in inches. Get out a ruler and measure the height of the grass right behind the mower. Secondly, you should never take off more than 1/3 the total height of the grass. Which means that if you are mowing your grass at 3 inches, you should mow by the time it is 4½ inches tall. Even if you are mowing at the correct height, letting the grass get too tall and then mowing it off can be a shock to it. If you are watering your lawn right now, and it isn't a brand new lawn, I ask the question why? The ground is quite damp and you need to turn those sprinklers off for a while UNLESS you have grass seed you are trying to get germinated. Lastly, even though it can make mowing kind of messy, you can mow wet grass. As long as you aren't leaving ruts with the lawn mower, you aren't damaging the turf. You aren't going to spread disease nor will you make the grass more susceptible to disease by mowing it when wet. Lastly, don't try to schedule mowing by the calendar. Monitor grass height and mow accordingly. The fescue and bluegrass have headed out and growth should be slowing! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420

KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Bird Houses

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Many homeowners enjoy putting up birdhouses around their property. Sometimes these are purely decorative birdhouses but often they are for serious housing of birds or at least an honest attempt to house birds. While many species of birds do not use bird houses, there are several species that will: Purple Martins, House and Carolina Wrens, Eastern Bluebirds as well as chickadees, Great Crested Flycatchers and others. But for a bird house to be put to use, you need the right kind of house in the right location. Purple Martins seem to be at the top of the heap in what homeowners want nesting in their yard. Unfortunately Purple Martins have very specific needs. The biggest need that most home yards can't meet is that martins want 50 feet of clear air space on all sides of their house, meaning no trees or anything else in the way. I see martin houses all the time with trees on two or three sides - martins won't use this. Eastern bluebirds have specific needs too - they want trees behind them and lot of wide open space in front of their house. Most urban settings are not suitable to bluebirds. Fortunately, House Wrens aren't quite as picky. Place a couple of House Wren birdhouses around your property and you have a good chance of having them occupied. Normally a pair of wrens will not tolerate another pair of wrens nesting in the same yard but put up several houses so that hopefully they'll find one acceptable. If you are a woodworker and want to build your own bird houses, I have some basic plans for several different types of bird houses! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Bagworms - Almost Time

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 starting to get phone calls about bagworm spraying. It's just a little bit early yet to start spraying. Bagworms are the insect that attacks cedars or junipers generally, but will feed on over 200 different species of plants. They make the little bags covered with foliage which they live in and which protects them. Bagworms are NOT the insects that form the big webby masses at the ends of tree branches in the late summer. Those are webworms and aren't much of a real problem. Bagworms, on the other hand, can kill a juniper or cedar tree or shrub if left unchecked. The adult bagworm is a moth and the female is flightless. In the fall of the year the males find the females, they mate and she fills her bag with up to 1,000 eggs that will hatch the following June. Since neither the adult female or the immature caterpillars have wings, they are limited to where they can go. If you had bagworms last year, even if you sprayed them, you need to treat this year. If your neighbor had bagworms last year, you will want to treat this year as their bagworms can crawl over and infest your cedars. Bagworms are starting to hatch now and will continue on into mid June. I recommend treating about June 10th and then again about two weeks later. Just about any of the standard lawn and garden pesticides will work, but you need to apply them with a hose end sprayer so that you get good thorough coverage to the point of drip off. Consider one of the insecticides for lawn and garden that comes in its own sprayer container that you just hook up to the hose. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Fire Blight

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It's turned into a wet spring. Wet springs bring diseases to plants. Even disease resistant roses, which aren't actually resistant to ALL diseases, will get some disease issues when we have weather like this. Some diseases we just live with and don't try to do anything about. Some diseases we need to spray for or the health or productivity of the plant will be in jeopardy - some can even kill the plant if let unchecked. One that we see regularly on pears and apples, fruiting or ornamental, is fireblight. Unlike most diseases that are fungal or viral in nature, fireblight is a bacterial disease that will infect the new branch growth. The most common symptom is blackened and blighted shoots throughout the tree. Some of the shoots may have a shepherd's crook appearance where the tip of the blighted branch bends down. Sometimes under high humidity conditions there may be small amber droplets of bacteria on the stems. In highly susceptible cultivars successive years of infection can ultimately kill the plant. While there is some resistance in some cultivars, even normally resistant cultivars can have some of the disease present. Since this is a bacterial disease fungicides won't work, you have to use special antibacterial sprays for plants. But again, these need to be applied before infection occurs. Once things dry out a little on in to summer you may want to cut off the blighted tips about ten inches below the discolored area. Then disinfect the pruning shears with rubbing alcohol between every pruning cut so as not to spread the disease around and cause more infection. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Apple Scab

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Just as I was talking about yesterday, we are having a lot of diseases in plants simply because of the wet weather. Sometimes it doesn't even take a lot of rain, just high humidity can be as bad or even worse. One disease that we do need to spray for is apple scab. We have two diseases in apple trees, both fruiting apples and ornamental flowering crabapples. One is cedar apple rust and we are basically to the end of that season and it's too late to do anything about it. But apple scab can keep cycling all through a summer if the weather stays wet enough. Apple scab causes dark olive green spots on both the upper and lower surfaces of leaves. Cedar apple rust causes orangish pustules or spots surrounded by a yellow halo. Both diseases cause the leaves to fall off the trees. In the case of apple scab though, the diseased leaves can continue to reinfect new leaves throughout the summer. Rust has to go to an alternate host before it comes back to the apple trees. Apple scab is what is responsible for flowering crabs that just keep losing their leaves throughout the summer. If you are buying new apple trees, get one that is resistant to apple scab. Most varieties are rated and I can help you find that information. For those already in the landscape that are suffering, there are several good fungicides to protect against apple scab including captan, Immunox, chlorothalonil and wettable sulfur. Immunox and chlorothalonil are probably the most readily available. Apply about every ten days with a good thorough soaking of all the foliage to break this disease cycle. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.