

Cleaning up Ornamental grasses

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Ornamental grasses go by many different names. They used to be just called pampas grass - the big tall grass that grows in big clumps, but now days we have many different species being grown as ornamentals. The question is often asked at this time of year of what to do with them. That depends on a couple of different things, first and foremost being are they close to the house or buildings, or a ways away, to me meaning at least 30 feet or so. Once these grasses have been well frosted and died down for the season, they are quite flammable. If they are close to the house, and especially if there might be a smoker in the house or visits periodically, these can be quite the fire hazard. If the clumps are over 30 feet from the house then you can wait until next spring to cut them down. The clumps do add color, form and interest to the fall and winter landscape. When you cut these clumps down you want to basically shear them off 3 to 4 inches tall if it is a perennial, but at ground level if it is an annual species. Many of these ornamental grasses have leaves with sharp edges or very annoying dust that will itch like the dickens if you get it down inside your shirt. In fact, if you are out in the country, and away from buildings or desirable evergreen trees, I recommend just burning the clump off in late March or early April. If you can't burn it then tie the clump up with heavy twine and then cut it off at the desired height. A powered hedge pruner can be used or a good sharp pair of lopping shears. Just be sure that if you are cutting them off, you wear long sleeves to protect your skin! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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When to winterize the lawn mower?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Often by the middle of November, the lawn hasn't seen a lawn mower for 3 or 4 weeks. Eventually you will need to tuck your lawnmower away for the winter. Ideally, you don't just push it into the garage or storage shed and utter a thank goodness that's over with for another year. No, you want to clean up your lawn mower and get it ready for when you need it next spring. This would be a good time to change the oil and air filter. You can either drain the gas or use a gasoline stabilizer. Fuels now days are much higher quality, but a gasoline stabilizer is probably still a good idea. Clean up all the dirt and grease off the mower. Clean out under the mower deck. Take off the blade and sharpen it. If your mower has belts to power the blades, give them a good check over to see if they are in good shape or starting to develop a lot of cracks. If the belt is looking worn, order a new one now so it's on hand BEFORE you actually need it. Replace the spark plug with a new one. But before you put the new plug in, squirt a little oil into the cylinder and turn the engine over a couple of times to get the cylinder walls, rings and pistons well lubricated. Then put the plug back in. Before you put the mower blades back on, wipe them down with an oily rag to protect from rust over the winter. If your mower has a battery, it's a good idea to remove it and set it on a piece of cardboard or a board. This seems to help it go through the winter better. Of course, if you don't want to do all of this, there are businesses that do it for you. But get your mower ready for spring, now. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

Otte.

Winterizing Roses

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I don't try to maintain as many hybrid tea roses as I once did, but the half dozen or so that I still have are still blooming, in fact several of them are six feet tall and blooming like crazy. Eventually we will have a good hard freeze that will knock them into dormancy and for the most part, I'm not doing anything until that has happened. Winterizing roses is something that isn't done regularly to all roses. Some roses are more winter hardy than others, in fact hybrid teas are probably the most sensitive and are about the only ones that I would worry about winterizing. Hybrid teas are generally grafted - if you have one that all of a sudden was growing but not blooming, then it died down below the graft. Get rid of it! You want to protect the crown of the plant and the bottom 6 to 10 inches of the canes. After it's gotten cold mound soil or compost about 8 to 10 inches high around the plant. Don't just scrape up soil between the plants - roses have shallow roots that may be easily damaged. Bring soil in from dormant parts of the garden or from outside the garden. After the ground has started to periodically freeze add some straw or mulch and then a little more soil to hold the mulch in place. The whole purpose is to protect the plant from rapid temperature changes that might bring it out of dormancy. As to the rest of the plant you can prune the plant down if the canes are really tall, like mine. Generally I don't want to cut them shorter than 36 inches tall, maybe 24. Remember that you may still have some dieback on these canes and may need more pruning next spring This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Getting Peonies Ready for 2017

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Okay, one last column on peonies this fall. Mine are just now really going fully dormant so I will have to prune them back soon. DON'T MOW THEM, get all that material away from the peony plant or bed for disease control. At this time, if you have encroachment of weeds, especially grasses like brome grass or winter annual grassy weeds, you can carefully spray them back with glyphosate. It's only going to work on green and growing plants so it won't help on Bermuda at this time. As you are doing this, also take time to sort of look at the soil around each plant. If it is starting to get mounded up, carefully rake this mound down. Excessive soil depth over the crown will decrease or stop blooming. Either do this raking down before spraying with glyphosate or a few days after. We generally don't need to mulch peonies down unless you just planted them this year. But what you do need to do is to fertilize them now and again about the time they start to grow next spring. Get a balanced fertilizer like 10-10-10 or 13-13-13 and apply 3 to 4 tablespoons around each plant. Do not place the fertilizer directly over the plant but sprinkle it in a band around the outer edge of the plant. Think of a donut with a large hole in the middle. Then lightly water the fertilizer enough to work it in to the soil but don't apply so much water as to cause it to start to run away from the plant. At that point you are ready to let the plants just settle down and go through winter. Then next year, pay attention to plants that aren't blooming very well and consider resetting them next fall. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Knotweed

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There is a plant that anyone with a gravel driveway is probably familiar with. It starts off growing in the late winter as a fairly low growing plant with smallish dark green leaves. It is quite fond of heavily compacted soils and gravelly soils like we have on and near our driveways. As we move on into summer, especially if it is hot and dry, it'll go dormant and start to look like little brown sticks. If more rain arrives it will releaf in late summer before dying with the freeze. This is knotweed and gets its name from the fleshy swollen knot on the stem where each leaf comes out. If you have a lot of this you have two choices for controlling it. The first is to apply a lawn weed preventer now. Most of the common crabgrass preventers are labeled for knotweed and now would be a good time to apply it. Surflan, XL, Pendimethalin, Barricade and Dimension all carry this label. Surflan and XL can only be used on tall fescue and warm season grasses (not bluegrass or ryegrass), but Pendimethalin, Barricade and Dimension can be used on all Kansas turfgrasses. In fact, Barricade and Dimension both have labels allowing for heavier application rates in the late fall that should provide pretty good crabgrass control come spring without reapplying! You can only do this as long as you won't be overseeding next spring. The other control option is to treat in the early spring with a standard broad leaf weed killer like Weed Out, Trimec, Weed-B-gon and others. But get this done in late March or early April when the weeds are young. Older weeds are harder to control! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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