

## Gardening Tips for October 31 - November 6, 2016

### Multi-colored Lady Beetles - Tis the Season

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When we have warm weather the end of October and early November I know that it is the season. Not the season for Halloween or Thanksgiving, but the season for multicolored Asian lady beetles. Not all lady beetles are the same. In fact, we have many species of lady beetles in Kansas, over ten and obviously from the name, the multi-colored Asian lady beetle is obviously not one of our native species. They were released by the USDA in the midwest many years ago to help control aphids, which they do very well.

Unfortunately, some of their other characteristics were not well studied prior to releasing them. When fall weather rolls in, these lady beetles don't gather together and hide under leaves and grass like our native species do, many of them swarm towards buildings and try to get inside. If they do get inside, most of them will die before spring. In the meantime, they can cover the sunny sides of houses and easily find their way inside. Some houses get swarmed annually yet others are left alone. We have no idea why! They are easy to identify, but basically, if they are on or in your home, they are the multicolored lady beetles. Spraying the outside of your house especially around windows, foundations, and doors can help, but you will probably still get some inside your home. Those that get inside your home are probably best dealt with by sucking them up with your vacuum cleaner. Aerosol insecticide sprays can work, but you're still going to have to clean them up anyway. The good news is that cooler and cloudy weather will stop this, at least until spring. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Spring Flowering Bulbs

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. One of the best things about spring flowering bulbs is that unless the ground freezes solid or gets buried under snow within the next six weeks, you still have plenty of time to get things like tulips, daffodils and other spring flowering bulbs planted. Ideally you still want soil temperatures in the planting zone to be 40 degrees or above so that some roots will develop this fall. As of the end of last week soil temperatures in the planting zone were still in the low 60s so you've got a lot of time to get this things planted. The standard bulbs that we all think of for spring blooms are pretty forgiving and tolerant of even fairly poor soils EXCEPT for poorly drained soils. Don't plant them in an area of your yard where water stands after every rain. If you have really have clay soils, mix in generous amounts of organic matter such as peat moss, well rotted manure, compost or partially composted leaves. Mix this into the soil below and above where you plant the bulbs. I always like to mix a little bone meal into the bottom of the planting hole for a good slow release phosphorus source in the root zone and then use a basic lawn fertilizer, without weed killers, at the rate of 2/3 pound per 100 square feet over the top after planting, or use 5 to 10 pounds of blood meal or 10 pounds of cottonseed meal. These are both good slow release nitrogen sources. Read the labels and make sure you are planting the bulbs at the proper depth. If you aren't sure call me, or you can use the general guideline of planting the bulbs 2 to 3 times the size of the bulb. In general, you can't plant 'em too deep! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Harvesting and Curing Black Walnuts

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Everyone is familiar with English Walnuts. When people talk about walnuts for eating or cooking, this is what most people think of. But black walnuts are a special treat with a unique flavor. And if you've ever had to buy black walnut meats you also know that they aren't cheap. We have a lot of black walnut trees in our area and many people view the nuts as a messy nuisance and will gladly let you collect them just to get them off the yard. Black walnuts take some special treatment and extra effort to get the meat out of the nut. Hulls need to be removed fairly soon and this can be done any number of ways. Some folks will force them through a hole in a board big enough for the nut but not the hull. Other folks just run over them with a lawn tractor. Then pick up the nuts and brush off the remains. Be advised however that the hulls of black walnuts have a stain that gets on EVERYTHING and is difficult to get off your hands. Get a pair of gloves and don't plan to use them for anything else. Once you have the hulls off throw them in a tub of water to wash them off. Good nuts will sink and nuts that float aren't probably worth messing with. Then spread the nuts out in a cool shady place like a garage or shed and let them dry for a couple of weeks. After they are dry you can store them in buckets or baskets until you are ready to process them. A standard nutcracker is not going to get into these rascals - they are tough. You will need to find a specialty nutcracker just for black walnuts. If you need help finding one let me know. You can try a hammer, but success is low! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Still Time to Plant Garlic

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I planted my garlic about ten days ago.

Fortunately if you can get some seed garlic (and please don't plant what you buy in the grocery store to cook with) you still have most of the month of November to get it planted. If you need a source, I can recommend several good online garlic supply houses! Just like our winter wheat, garlic needs to go into the ground in the fall, get a little bit of root growth and then go through a cold treatment so that it will be triggered to produce daughter bulbs or what we know as cloves of garlic. If you plant garlic in the spring, it will simply grow like an onion. Garlic needs a well drained soil, full sunshine, and lots of nutrients. You plant garlic 2 inches deep and about 6 inches apart in the row. Many commercial producers plant garlic in rows 9 inches apart, but you can plant it at any row spacing that is comfortable to you. If I'm planting multiple rows I'll often do two or three rows at 9 inches and then a walk way of 18 to 24 inches. Garlic is a heavy feeder so spread some garden fertilizer after planting and then top dress it 2 or 3 times after it starts growing in the spring. If we have one enemy of garlic in Kansas, it is heat. Last year's very warm May and hot June really took a toll on my garlic. A long cool April, May and June are ideal for garlic. Naturally you can't do much about the weather, so we just try to help it in other ways. Keep it well watered, but don't drown it and once it starts to grow in the spring, consider thick layers of straw mulch to slow how fast the ground warms and protect it from any early hot weather! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Time to Stop Planting Grass

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 get past mid October and certainly past the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, it's time to stop planting grass for a while. If you have to get a lawn established then you can actually lay sod for quite some time yet IF you can find a source of it, but planting new grass seed in November is risky and here is why. The soil is still warmer than normal so you can probably get grass seed up in a couple of weeks. Young grass plants are amazingly cold tolerant. As long as the grass seed has at least a couple of true leaves, in other words not JUST getting a first leaf emerging from the seed, it can handle quite cold temperatures. Winter kill of new grass seedlings doesn't usually happen because the plants freeze. Winter kill does happen but not from cold damage. In the winter, especially in Kansas, we can have a lot of freezing and thawing cycles. This freeze-thaw process causes soils to shrink and swell and this puts a lot of physical pressure on plants. Plants can actually start to be forced up out of the ground through the winter especially plants with small, poor or weak root systems. In extreme conditions, even well rooted plants like alfalfa can be pushed an inch or two out of the soil. Unfortunately the more clay there is in the soil the worse this problem can be. So small grass plants, if they even are pushed up a little ways can start to have their small crown and root system exposed to the weather, specifically the wind. Winter wind in Kansas can be cold and it can be dry. Those tender crowns and roots are then easily dehydrated, they wither, they die and that's winterkill! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.