

### Fall Lawn Fertilization

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The biggest impact that you can have on how your lawn looks next spring is less about what you do in March and April and far more about what you do in September and October! Fescue and bluegrass are cool season grasses. Now that we are through summer heat, they are starting to really take off and grow again, although much of that growth is going to be below ground as the root system and crown of the plant grows. Fertilizing in the fall is very crucial to really get those built up and ready to grow next spring. As a matter of fact, lawns fertilized in the fall will be a darker green and thicker than those fertilized in the spring and will actually have less excessive top growth from the fall fertilization. If you have a medium to low management lawn, I would fertilize once this fall and do that anytime from now through the end of October. This should be a straight high nitrogen lawn fertilizer. But don't use the weed and feed products right now as it is still a little bit too early, by about three weeks. The weed control products need to be applied to actively growing weeds. Right now many of those weeds that bloom next spring are just starting to germinate or will in the next few weeks. If we apply the weed control too soon, it won't do any good. Wait until the last half of October. Even if you fertilize your yard now, you can go back in about a month and use the weed and feed products and have excellent control and the added benefit of a second fertilization. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Reseeding or Overseeding

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The best time for planting fescue or bluegrass lawn seed is September. There is an old saying that you can plant these cool season grasses any month of the year that has the letter R in the name. While there is some truth in this, the reality is that September is the best time to seed a new lawn. If you are planting bluegrass, you need to get that seed in the ground by October 1. If you are planting tall fescue, your window is a little bit larger and you have until October 15. You can plant later than that, with both grass species, but you may run into problems. The problem with later planting is not that the grass will freeze out and die, but rather that it won't develop a very good root system. That good root system becomes critical if we have a winter with lots of freezing and thawing of the soils, which is fairly common around here. The freezing and thawing of the soils will cause the grass plants that aren't well rooted to get heaved out of the ground, what we call frost heaving. Once they get even partially heaved out of the soil the roots and crowns desiccate and die. If, because of wet weather you don't get your grass seed planted by the designated cut off times, you also have the option of doing a dormant season planting. Once we get into mid November and later, the ground is cold enough that germination will actually be delayed, or take place very slowly. You can then plant the seed with the knowledge that it won't be up and growing until next spring. For this to work you need to plant a full rate of seed and have the seed placed into the ground, not scattered on top! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Little Barley Control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If you have been fighting little barley in your yard, you know exactly what I'm talking about. It's the little grass that grows in the spring and dies early in the summer and leaves those seeds with the sharp edges that get in your socks and your pet's feet. Now you may be wondering why I'm talking about a weed that's a problem in the spring when it's September. Well, little barley is a winter annual. It starts growing in the fall and then goes to seed in the spring. If you want to control little barley you need to interrupt it when it is trying to get started. So basically you need to apply a crabgrass preventer NOW as it is starting to germinate, and it needs to be applied soon! There is one product, Weed Impede that has little barley on it's label, but that may be a challenge to find. The other option is to use a product containing dimension, chemical name dithiopyr, which is in many crabgrass preventers and can be found around the area. Dimension has barley species on the label and little barley is a true barley so it's not an off label treatment, but it does need to be applied very soon to still be effective. One advantage to Dimension is that it does have some reach back ability in some species to kill seedlings that are at a 1 to 3 leaf stage so that may give some additional control for early germinating plants. Whichever product you use, you need to get it applied and watered in before it can start to work. Irrigation or a timely rain of about a half inch will do the trick. Also, if you are doing any overseeding or reseeding, DO NOT use a weed preventer like these products! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Reblooming Christmas or Thanksgiving Cactus

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When I was a kid growing up, my great Aunt had a huge Christmas cactus on her back porch that always bloomed profusely every year. She gave me a start of that plant and it never bloomed for me. My mom took the cactus from me and had it blooming by the next fall. Go figure! If you have one of those Christmas or Thanksgiving cactus, different species, but closely related, there are certain physiological requirements that the plant must have before it will bloom. I think my Aunts back porch was perfect. Flowering for these will not occur unless induced by temperature and/or light. If the plant is held at a fairly constant 50 to 55 degrees, flowering will occur regardless of day length, but the flowering may be sporadic and not uniform. So, if you can subject your plants to uninterrupted nights longer than 12 hours AND temperatures between 59 and 69 degrees for 25 consecutive nights you will initiate flower production and it will be much better than using temperature only. Starting on the first day of autumn we will have nights of 12 hours or longer which will work as long as we don't get room light. A good way to make sure that this is happening is to cover the plant with an aluminum foil lined box. Cover the plant at 6 in the evening, uncover it at 7. Keep it cool and do this for 25 days and then you can bring it back to normal conditions. If you do this you should soon see buds starting to form and then it will take 9 to 10 weeks for the flowers to fully form and start to bloom. Keep these in indirect sunlight and the soil moist but not soggy. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Sweet Potatoes and Ornamental Sweet Potatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If you have sweet potatoes in your garden you need to get them dug before a frost. Now, unlike Irish potatoes, which are not related to sweet potatoes, and many other vegetables, sweet potatoes do not lose quality as they get bigger so you can wait until the last minute to harvest them if they are still growing well. BUT, be forewarned that cold temperatures can damage the sensitive roots, which is what the sweet potato that we eat technically is. The Irish potato is a tuber, but sweet potatoes are a root! So it is critical that you harvest sweet potatoes no later than the first fall freeze. Sometimes it can be a waiting game and if you have just a few hills that you can dig in a short period of time, go ahead and play the game. But if you have a lot of hills, you may want to test dig one hill and see if the roots are big enough to be the size that you want. Sweet potatoes can store for quite a while, but you have to treat them right. Immediately after digging, place the roots in a warm humid location for 5 to 10 days to cure. 85 to 90 degrees would be ideal. This curing process heals wounds in the tender skin from digging, generally toughens up the skin and also helps convert starches to sugar which improves the overall flavor of the roots. After this curing process, the roots need to be stored but not in a refrigerator. Cold can damage the roots after curing so keep them above 55 degrees. Temps lower than this injures the roots, shortens the storage life and gives them an off flavor. To answer the oft asked question, yes ornamental sweet potatoes are edible too. They just may not be as tasty.

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