

Wasps in the house?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is the time of year that people, especially if they have a fireplace or wood stove in the house, start to call me about wasps appearing in their house. The whole thing is, they usually aren't really wasps! Oh, sometimes a bunch of new wasp queens will end up overwintering somewhere in or near a house, but this is rather unusual as they normally overwinter someplace outside. No, what more often happens is that these "wasps" aren't wasps at all, but adult forms of various wood borers. The most common one is the painted hickory borer but we can also get the locust borer. These long-horned beetles are definitely a beetle but when they are flying the yellow striped body can look very much like a paper wasp or hornet, especially if it's flying around a window and is backlit or up in a light in the ceiling. The painted hickory borer only infests dead trees that died within one year or raw wood that has been cut for less than one year. What often happens is that firewood is cut, and this rascal will infest a wide range of species, the adult borer will lay eggs on the wood and the young borers will infest the wood - you've probably often seen sawdust and the holes. As you bring in firewood in the winter you burn it up, and the borers, regularly. But then we get to early spring, you've brought in a stack of firewood but it's warmer and you haven't been burning it, so it sits there in the house, the wood warms up and the borers emerge as adults and start flying around. Relax though as they won't infest furniture or woodwork. They won't sting you, and you don't have to treat anything! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Early spring garlic management

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Y'all have heard me rave on about growing garlic in the past and slowly I'm getting a few of you convinced to give it a try. I really do enjoy growing garlic. As I was looking at mine over the weekend it became very apparent that we have had a mild winter and an early spring because it has been growing like gangbusters already this year. One of the problems that we see not just in garlic but many of our garden plants, well, except for maybe tomatoes, is that we probably don't fertilize them enough. I fertilized my garlic after planting last fall and I fertilized it again this past weekend. I'll wait another month and probably give it one more application to get it on home. Most vegetable crops can't get by with just a preplant fertilizer application. They need to be fertilized periodically through the growing season. We call these applications side dressing, because we apply fertilizer along beside the row. I have a handy chart on sidedressing of your vegetable garden crops, the timing is different on different types of plants. Let me know if you'd like a copy of this chart! Back to garlic - garlic, like onions, has a shallow root system that needs regular watering, like weekly. I didn't get my garlic watered regularly enough last year through that hot dry May and it noticeably reduced the size of my garlic crop. I'm not going to let that happen again! The other enemy of garlic is heat. I want the ground to warm up some, but before it gets too hot I will be spreading a nice thick straw mulch out there to slow down how fast the soil warms up, in essence, trying to keep it cool! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Time for crabgrass preventers?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. For years we have said that crabgrass preventers should be applied about the time that the redbuds are in full bloom. While I have seen redbuds blooming I don't think that we are in full bloom yet, but we are getting there fast. Thank goodness cooler weather returned last week and slowed things down though! Not all crabgrass preventers are the same. Some of the early crabgrass preventer products including balan and trifluralin, are quite short lived, really only giving control for about 5 or 6 weeks. The second generation including things like pendimethalin were better, giving about 12 weeks of control. Then along came what I'm calling the 3rd generation products which includes barricade and dimension. These products can give over 5 months of control, depending on the rate. If you apply one of the newer products now, which I would recommend, then you should see pretty good control all summer long with just the one application. Products like pendimethalin should probably be applied a second time in late June to make sure that you get season long control as crabgrass can still germinate in late August and make seed. If you are using one of the older products, you may want to shift to a newer product as you will need to apply about 4 times to get season long control. Once applied these products need a half inch of rain to activate the herbicide and then it may take another 7 to 10 days to be fully active. Read and follow all label directions, but given the crazy weather, I'd be applying crabgrass preventers soon, unless you are over-seeding! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Flowering Crabapples

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Last week I talked about flowering crabapples being a better landscaping choice than ornamental pears, so let me expand that thought a little bit more today. Flowering crabapples do not volunteer readily from seed spread by wildlife which is one of the growing concerns with the ornamental pears. There are a couple of cultivars of flowering crabapples that are even fruitless if you don't want any fruit. There are hundreds of cultivars of flowering crabs in the trade. You can find cultivars that have white to red flowers and combinations in between. You can find them in many different sizes and tree shapes to fit the space or landscaping need that you have. If you've been paying attention the past week or so, many of the flowering crabapples have been coming into bloom and they have been spectacular. If you see a small to medium tree that is covered in pink to reddish blossoms lately, it is likely a flowering crabapple. The one thing that you want to be careful of with flowering crabs are two leaf diseases, apple scab and cedar apple rust. While these diseases won't outright kill a tree, they can severely defoliate a tree year after year and weaken it so it just starts to die slowly. Fortunately we have many newer cultivars with good leaf disease resistance. Rather than trying to list some of these, just stop by the Extension Office and pick up our flowering crabapple bulletin, or look it up online. It lists cultivars, the flower color, the fruit color, size and retention, it's resistance rating to the two diseases and fireblight and other general comments about that cultivar. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Things that we think, that just aren't so!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There are all sorts of things that we have always heard and if you hear something often enough, then it's true, right? No, no it isn't and that's where I come in - I'm a horticultural myth buster! Some of the factoids that I've been asked to verify over the years have been hilarious, others sad, and some just leave me shaking my head. Companion planting for example, does it work? Some people swear by it. I've yet to see any true replicated experiments that can justify it. If it's working for you, or you think it's working for you, then keep doing it. But be prepared with a plan B for insect control if all of a sudden it isn't working. Same thing goes for planting certain plants in the flower beds or in pots around the deck because they will keep the mosquitoes away. Absolutely no scientific evidence, that it works, just individual's personal testimonies. Cedar trees put compounds in the soil or acidify it or do something because nothing grows under them, right? Nope. Nothing grows under cedars because the shade is too dense and the massive root system of the cedar takes the nutrients and water before anything else can. Remove the cedar, till it up, and you can garden immediately. If you want to lower the pH of your soil, just add compost. I'm sorry, that's a wrong answer but thank you for playing. Many composts are actually neutral to alkaline pH. Some composted bark may be slightly acidic. Compost does improve drainage but if you really want to acidify soil then add sulfur. Not iron sulfate, but soil sulfur. It's a slow process but it works. So any other myths to bust? This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.