

Little Barley

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The questions have started arriving about the grass showing up in lawns that is turning brown already and full of sharp pointy little seeds that get into your socks and in the pads of pet's feet. This is little barley and it is a growing problem. Little barley is what we call a winter annual plant. It starts growing in the fall, overwinters as a small plant and then grows rapidly in the spring, produces a seed head and then dies within the next few weeks. Regardless of what you do now, it has already produced seed and will be back next year. Little barley is one of those weeds that needs open space and bare soil to get started. It takes advantage of any opportunity that we give it. As with most of the other weeds, having a thick lawn that is mowed tall is the best defense against this stuff. And while we may do this in the best parts of the yard, there's still areas along driveways and sidewalks and streets that end up being hotspots, the grass doesn't thrive and there you go! About the only option right now for dealing with it is fire and for most of us, that's out of the questions because we live in town. In the short run we may have to resort to dealing with this stuff like you would annual bluegrass and that's to apply a crabgrass preventer just before the 1st of September. Little barley is starting to be put on my and more crabgrass preventer's labels but you may want to check before applying. Remember it has to be activated with irrigation or rainfall before it will work. Do not apply a crabgrass preventer if you are also planning on reseeding this fall as it will cause failure. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Hilling Potatoes and Fertilizing Onions

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Plants in the garden are growing quickly now that the air and soil have both finally warmed up. If you grow potatoes this would be a good time to apply your last side dressing of fertilizer and make sure that you are hilling the potatoes up.

Potatoes are borne on a potato plant along the stem ABOVE the piece of seed potato that you planted. Your best potato crops are going to come when you've hilled the plants up regularly during the spring. Potatoes will start to wilt down in hot weather so keep them well watered. One other little hint about potatoes, is that they can also be planted in early to mid summer for a fall harvest in October. They can be planted from the end of June thru the end of July. Most garden stores will still have seed potatoes in stock. If not you can order them online. Depending on the types of onions you planted some may be nearing harvest and others may still have another 4 to 6 weeks. If they are still actively growing, lightly fertilize them now and keep them well watered. They tend to be shallow rooted so regular watering is a must! Remember that it is common for as much as 2/3 of the onion bulb to be out of the soil. This is normal and you don't need to cover the bulb with soil. However, once a plant is mature it is important to get it harvested to avoid bulbs getting sunburned. Once the tops start to fall over naturally you may want to break over the tops that haven't fallen to facilitate drying of the neck. Allow a few days to pass, then dig them and spread them out in a dry place to finish drying down before storing. Do not peel the onions however! 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. By now, much of the foliage from those spring flowering bulbs, you know, tulips, daffodils, etc. is dying or has died down and it is safe to remove it. It's always important to leave that foliage on as long as possible as those leaves produce food that gets stored in the bulb for next year's blossoms. That foliage can be carefully pulled off by hand, clipped with garden shears or even just mowed over. If the leaves aren't fully dry yet be careful if you are pulling them off by hand as you might end up yanking the bulb out of the ground. At the time that you are removing the foliage you also want to somehow mark the location of the bulbs. I know in my flower bed I interplant everything else around the bulbs so it gets mixed together. The reason you want to know where they are is because in the fall you will want to fertilize the ground where they are growing. Make a map, take a photo, stick a stake or flag in the ground, just anything that can help you find it again. The question also routinely comes up about digging and resetting bulbs at this time. I really don't like the notion of planting bulbs, even resetting them at this time. Digging them is fine, but I then recommend letting them dry down and then storing them in a cool dry place until October which is a far better time to plant them. The problem is that we dig them and then forget where we put them and don't find them until 3 years later. If you do dig them now, or even in late August, spread them out, let the dirt dry down, separate them, store them in peat moss in a box in a cool place and plant in October. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Deadheading

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 talk to a trucker about deadheading, he'll think you're talking about making a trip without a load. That's not the type of deadheading I'm talking about this morning. Deadheading, for this discussion, is removing the spent flowers from flowering plants to encourage more blooming. Not all species benefit from deadheading.

Sedums, impatiens, periwinkle don't seem to mind either way. Species that do benefit noticeably from deadheading include geraniums, coreopsis, petunias, marigolds, snapdragons, begonias, roses, zinnias, salvia and yarrow. Part of this comes down to the nature of the plants; they want to produce seed. To produce seed they must flower. If you don't deadhead, the plants will focus on making seed. The presence of developing seeds will inhibit new flower bud production. So you keep removing the spent flowers to stimulate the plant to make more flower buds. You are tricking the plant, or better yet, panicking it into making more flowers. Deadheading is easy enough to do, especially if you take a few minutes every few days. Look for blossoms that are past their prime and simply pinch the stem below the flower between your thumb and a finger. On most species, this area is small enough that you can just snap it clean. On some tougher flowers you may need to get shears or a hand pruner. Do not pull up on the blossom as it might be possible to unroot the plant which kind of defeats the purpose. However, once you get towards the end of the season you may want to leave the flowers on and let it make seed for the wildlife to eat! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Tree Sprouts

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It isn't uncommon to find small trees growing in your lawn. Right now my lawn probably has thousands and I'm going to have to get this situation under control, soon. Little trees in your yard will come from two sources - they are either brand new trees coming up from seeds, or they are sprouts coming up from the roots of existing trees. If they are root sprouts, you have a problem. All you can do is cut them off because any herbicide you put on them to control them will get taken up by the roots of the main tree and you will eventually damage or kill the tree. There's really no way to stop them from growing - and some species are much worse than others. Seedling trees have to be treated like a weed. You can't spray them in the fall as the leaves are all gone by the time we spray lawn weeds. You basically have to spray now, which is a potential issue because of the risk of drift to desirable plants, especially flowers and vegetable gardens. If you just have a seedling here and there, use a pre-mixed poison ivy killer and wet it thoroughly. It may take a couple of shots, but it will work. If you are like me and have LOTS of seedlings you need to get a hose end sprayer and apply a good soaking spray of a broad leaf weed killer to large areas. There may be some that are a little better established that you'll have to spot treat later with the poison ivy killers. Be careful and leave a little distance between where you are spraying and sensitive desirable plants. Spray when it is fairly calm and when temperatures are below 80 degrees - below 70 would be even better. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.