

How much freeze damage was there?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Someone called me last week wanting to know how to spray their peaches and plums to not have worms in them. I told them it probably won't be a problem this year as we very well won't have fruit on those trees. Then I told them how to spray for fruit insects. First of all, your fruit trees are going to be fine, fruit crop aside. When we talk about damage to fruit trees we are talking about flower buds and fruit bearing ability. Fruit trees have one shot every spring at setting fruit and a freeze at the wrong time ends that chance. Leaf buds, if they do get frozen, can be regenerated easily enough. So from an overall total health of the tree point of view, that cold snap we had is no problem. However, we won't probably know until well into May how much damage we had on fruit tree blooms. Peaches and apricots were the furthest along. I saw apricot trees in full bloom prior to the cold snap. If apricots are in full bloom, a temperature of 22 degrees will kill 90% of the flowers. If it's in early or first bloom, it has to get down to 19 degrees to kill 90% of the flowers. I did not see many peaches blooming. Peaches at full bloom can have 90% blossom kill at 24 degrees. If buds are just showing pink, it can take down to 18 degrees. The coldest I had was 22 degrees. Another night was 24 and a third night 27. Apples and pears should have been holding tight enough that they weren't damaged, yet. Now we've gone through another really warm spell and more things are blooming and everything is moving quickly again. Are we through with really cold weather? We could be, but we'll see! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Fruit Tree Sprays

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I'm starting to receive phone calls about fruit tree sprays and here's what you need to know. You need to treat with a fungicide and an insecticide and once you start spraying, if you really want to protect the tree and the fruit, you need to spray every 7 to 10 days. Also, when and what you need to spray with depends on not only what kind of fruit tree, but even which cultivar. Apples need to be protected from scab and rust. Once you start to see green in the leaf buds, start spraying with myclobutinal known as Immunox. Once the petals have dropped, you need to add a fruit tree spray containing an insecticide. If you can still find one with captan and malathion, buy it fast. If you can't find that one but can find Bonide Fruit Tree and Plant Guard buy it. After June 1st drop the Immunox and just use the Bonide product. The label says to treat every 10 days but if it isn't raining a lot, spread that out to every 14 days. For all other fruit trees, one of the fruit tree sprays alone will probably be adequate. If you still have any fruit tree spray with malathion and or methoxychlor you can still use it and I would encourage you to use it as it still will give very good control. These are older products and companies just aren't relabeling them which in many ways is a shame. You may also find fruit tree sprays with pyrethrins and neem oil. These will work okay but you will need to add a fungicide like Immunox on apples. As for anything that ONLY has Neem oil, you will find effectiveness disappointing as Neem seems to be fairly weak on apple insect pests. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Asparagus Bed Management

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. At the rate we are going asparagus spears will be poking out of the ground very soon if they aren't already. So if you haven't already, get all of the old growth removed from the bed now. Some people mow it off, I prefer to cut it off at ground level just to remove spores of asparagus rust and tidy up the bed. You should also fertilize at this time. Periodically soil testing the asparagus bed is a good idea but if lacking a recent soil test, apply 1 to 2 pounds of a 10-20-10 fertilizer per 20 feet of row. It is best if this is raked into the soil or very lightly tilled in, assuming that the spears haven't started to come up. Once harvest is over, apply this same fertilizer rate as an over the top broadcast treatment. Now you probably have a few weeds coming along. Get down on your hands and knees and see if there are any spears coming up above ground. If there aren't, then you can control the weeds in the bed with any one of the glyphosate compounds like Roundup or Killzall. Immediately after that you will want to spread a garden weed preventer containing trifluralin. Not all trifluralin products have asparagus on the label though so look closely. MiracleGro Weed Preventer Granules and Monterey Vegetable and Ornamental Weeder both do. You can't spray any herbicide while harvesting but once you end harvest, cut off everything at ground level and spray with glyphosate again if you have weeds present. Later on in the season if you have grasses becoming an issue treat with a grass only compound contain sethoxydim like Hi-Yield grass killer. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Eastern Tent Caterpillars

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I haven't seen any yet but I'm expecting to see them any day - Eastern Tent Caterpillars that is. Many people call the webworms we see late in the season tent caterpillars but that isn't correct. Eastern tent caterpillars are an early season pest most often found in fruit trees, including wild cherry and wild plum. Eggs were laid late last spring and have survived on the branches of these plants through the summer, fall and winter. The eggs are usually laid near a crotch in the upper portion of the plant. The eggs hatch and the caterpillars quickly build a small silken tent in the crotch of that branch usually enveloping leaves and buds within this protective structure to feed on. As they grow and their appetites increase they will expand the web to include more food. Normally they are completely through feeding by mid May, most of the caterpillars will move to the ground, spin a cocoon, emerge several weeks later to mate, lay eggs and die. While the webbing in the trees or shrubs may be unsightly, the feeding occurs so early in the year that it really doesn't hurt the tree or fruit production IF you have fruit. If you find the webbing unsightly, just rip it out of the tree and throw it in the trash or the burn barrel. Most common insecticides are very effective on tent caterpillars. Organic controls containing spinosad or BT need to be ingested so you may need to tear open the webbing and spray inside where they are feeding. But ultimately, as I said earlier, they don't really do much damage and often the best approach, and certainly the easiest, is to do nothing! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Tree Planting Rules

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I wish I could tell you how many new, often expensive, trees are literally killed by the homeowner through one of many errors. Following is a quick list to improve your success with a newly planted tree. Stop by the Extension Office for a more detailed printed version of this list. First pick the right tree for the site. Avoiding problems is easier than fixing them later. Keep the tree watered and in a shady location until you get it in the ground IF you plant it yourself. Don't buy it and hang on to it for 2 months before planting. At planting remove all wires, labels, cords, etc. that were on the tree. Dig a proper hole that will have the tree sitting slightly above the level it was at the nursery. You want the root ball on solid ground so it doesn't sink. Any beginning root flares should just be visible at ground level. Dig the hole only as deep as the root ball but several times wider. It's more important for roots to go out than down. Remove all the container, or wire basket or burlap. This stuff does not rot as fast as you may think it will. If you see roots circling around the pot, cut down through them with a knife so new roots will grow out and won't eventually strangle the tree. Don't cut back the branches of the tree - it can cause sucker growth that isn't wanted. Water the tree thoroughly at planting and then once a week if we don't get adequate rainfall. Mulch around the tree 2 to 4 inches deep and three times the diameter of the root ball. Do not allow mulch to actually touch the trunk. If possible, do not stake the tree. Many smaller trees really do not need staking at all. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.