

Sandbur Control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Sandburs are an all too common pain in the grass, I said grass, with a G. Unfortunately, by the time many homeowners become aware of them, the nasty sharp spiny seeds have already been formed and there isn't much you can do. Now, when I'm talking about sandburs I'm talking about the plant that looks like a grass and has the spiny burs up on the stalk. The plant with little yellow flowers that grows flat and spreads out is puncturevine and we'll talk about that one soon. Sandburs don't grow in thick stands of grass. They grow in hot areas with thin or no grass stand often, but not always, in sandy areas, hot spots, areas along curbs, sidewalks and driveways. It is an annual plant that sprouts and grows from seed every spring. Where you had sandburs last year, you will likely have sandburs again this year. Crabgrass preventers can reduce the population but not eliminate. The seeds are now starting to sprout and grow. They are small little plants and easily overlooked. But since you had them last year you assume you have them this year. Fortunately, the crabgrass killers like quinclorac and fenoxaprop-p-ethyl, read the fine print, work very well on small sandburs. Because sandburs will sprout and grow well into August, I would plan on treating the areas that have had sandburs in past years, about once a month into August. If it gets to mid to late summer and you suddenly find you have sandburs going to seed, all you can do is put on heavy gloves and start pulling them. Place them in a bucket and then get rid of them in the trash or a burn pile. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Bagworms

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 get phone calls about bagworm spraying. It's just a little bit early yet to start spraying. Bagworms are the insect that attacks cedars or junipers generally, but will feed on over 200 different species of plants. They make the little bags covered with foliage which they live in and which protects them. Bagworms are NOT the insects that form the big webby masses at the ends of tree branches in the late summer. Those are webworms and aren't much of a real problem. Bagworms, on the other hand, can kill a juniper or cedar tree or shrub if left unchecked. The adult bagworm is a moth and the female is flightless. In the fall of the year the males find the females, they mate and she fills her bag with up to 1,000 eggs that will hatch the following June. Since neither the adult female or the immature caterpillars have wings, they are limited to where they can go. If you had bagworms last year, even if you sprayed them, you need to treat this year. If your neighbor had bagworms last year, you will want to treat this year as their bagworms can crawl over and infest your cedars. Bagworms are starting to hatch now and will continue on into mid June. I recommend treating about June 10th and then again about two weeks later. Just about any of the standard lawn and garden pesticides will work, but you need to apply them with a hose end sprayer so that you get good thorough coverage to the point of drip off. Consider one of the insecticides for lawn and garden that comes in its own sprayer container that you just hook up to the hose. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Mosquitoes

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I was out getting a flower bed planted the other evening and spent as much time slapping mosquitoes as I did planting flowers. Mosquitoes are abundant this spring thanks to all that rain that we've had. I frequently am asked for recommendations of insecticides to spray around yards to knock down the mosquitoes. Here's the problem, spraying for adult mosquitoes is like locking the barn door after the horses are gone. Effective control of mosquitoes needs to start by preventing them from ever reproducing. It also needs to be one on a large scale basis. Many of the mosquito species we have, and we have about 50 species in Kansas, are strong enough fliers that they will travel several hundred yards for a meal. Treating your yard for the adults is a drop in the bucket. Mosquitoes breed in standing calm water. Shallow is good and emergent vegetation in the shallow calm water is even better. Generation time for mosquitoes is 7 to 14 days. In the warmest days of summer all it takes is a week, in cooler periods, two weeks. So now think about all the standing water you have in your yard and around your home. Oh, you don't have any? Start checking! Bird baths? Pet water? Saucers under potted plants, indoors or out? Gutters that may not drain completely following a rain? I've seen very few yards in our area that don't have standing water. Dump and change water in bird baths and pet water every few days. Same for saucers under pots, just check everywhere. In larger bodies of water use the biological control called dunks, available at garden centers. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Do Bug Zappers Work?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Yesterday I talked about mosquito control and want to expand on that today. If I mention bug zappers I think most of you, at least over the age of 30, know well what I'm talking about. Haven't seen a lot of these in recent years but there was an advertisement recently for a bag zapper and LED bulb all in one. Sigh. I really thought we'd moved on from this nonsense years ago. Do bug zappers kill insects? Yes. Do they kill the insects that you want killed? Not very many. I don't care if they are using an LED light, a florescent bulb or a black light, they simply are not an effective form of mosquito control. For one thing the grids on these things are often of a size that most mosquitoes won't even make contact between the electrically charged grids. Most of the stuff that gets fried in these things aren't even a pest to humans. Secondly, the idea of putting a bright light out near my deck where I want to spend my evenings is simply asking to draw in more and more insects, most of which won't be killed. There are all sorts of devices out there that are sold for mosquito control or repelling. Most don't work. They always riddle their ads with references to malaria and now Zika, both diseases that aren't in Kansas mosquitoes. Now, going back to what I said yesterday, trying to deal with the adults is acting entirely too late. We will have mosquitoes in Kansas in the spring summer and fall. Period. Work to reduce breeding areas and then focus on using repellents that have been proven to work, not hocus pocus folk remedies that don't hold up under scrutiny! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Post Blooming Peony Care

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As peony blooming season winds down, it's a critical time to get to work on having a great blossom year next year. I know more than one homeowner, or homeowners spouse, that once they get through blooming would love to just mow them down and be done with them. Unfortunately that is the last thing you want to do. For the rest of the season we want to first note which ones didn't bloom well. Peonies that start blooming less and less are either not getting enough sunlight OR they are getting too much dirt accumulated at the base of the plant. Either rake off some soil this fall or dig them up and reset them this fall. After you've noted any blooming issues, go through and snip off the spent flowers so they don't try to make seed, UNLESS you want to try to start some peonies from seed - which can lead to some interesting results. Getting those seed pods off the plant focuses the attention of the plant on storing up food reserves for next springs blooms. Next, if you didn't fertilize the plants when the shoots were a couple inches high in the spring, go through and lightly fertilize with a 10-10-10 type of fertilizer. A couple ounces per plant sprinkled around the edge of the clump is good. Follow this up in the fall with another fertilization after you cut the plants down. Finally, protect the foliage the rest of the summer, through at least late August or early September. If your peonies get a lot of leaf spots, what we call peony measles, you may want to spray with a fungicide periodically. But more importantly, remove all old foliage in the fall! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.