

Mow Tall, Stay Sharp!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When it's spring time, and it's been raining, regardless of whether it's cool, warm or just right, the grass is going to grow. And the better care you give it and the more you fertilize it, the more it is going to grow! For as much as homeowners seem to want a lush deep green lawn, many homeowners don't like to mow. So they go as long as they can, then come in and mow the grass way shorter than they really should. Right away these homeowners have violated two basic tenants of good lawn maintenance. The first is that the lawn needs to be mowed at the ideal height for that turfgrass species. Our cool season grasses, like bluegrass and fescue, or even perennial ryegrass, need long leaf blades. While much of the literature will tell you 2 to 3 or 3.5 inches tall, I really lean towards that 3 inch minimum. You will have fewer problems if you keep it tall. The second tenant is that you never take off more than 1/3 the height of the grass. If you let the grass get 6 inches tall and whack it back to 2 inches you really mess up the grass plant as it tries to maintain a good root system. The other failure that I often see is a dull mower blade. A sharp blade cuts the grass cleanly and easily. A dull mower blade shreds the grass and takes more energy. Take a look at your lawn a few days after mowing. If the blade is dull you will see little white caps on each grass leaf where the shredded leaf has died back to where there is consistent leaf material. Most mower manufacturers recommend sharpening the blade once every ten hours of use. Be kind to your grass, stay sharp!

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Blackspot of Roses

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Many homeowners love roses. If you have roses then I'll bet that there are times that you've noticed black and yellow spots on your rose leaves and then all the leaves start falling off. It's not uncommon to all of a sudden have a rose bush with beautiful blooms and no leaves. This disease is very common on roses and is called, appropriately enough, blackspot of rose. This is a fungal disease that overwinters on old leaves and canes, usually infects lower leaves first and really likes high humidity (or rain) and warm temperatures, preferably 75 to 85 degrees. Brand new leaves that are just emerging from the bud are the most susceptible to infection. There are many newer varieties of roses that have good blackspot resistance. But older roses, and a lot of the miniature roses are very susceptible. The first step is to keep the leaves as dry as possible. Don't use sprinklers, don't use foliar applied fertilizers, plant roses with adequate spacing around them so when the leaves get wet, they dry off quickly - full sunshine is ideal! When leaves fall off, pick them up or rake them up and burn them or toss in the trash - not the compost pile. Fungicidal sprays are available and are very effective. There are many different fungicides labeled for blackspot control on roses. If the season is wet and infection is high, plan to treat about every ten days to protect leaves as they emerge from the bud. What you need to keep in mind with most diseases and fungicides is that infection can occur through the upper and lower leaf surfaces so spray the fungicide on both leaf surfaces. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Poison Hemlock control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. In the past couple of decades the plant known as poison hemlock has gone from being an interesting novelty to a real nuisance. Poison hemlock is poisonous if it is eaten. All parts, including the seeds are poisonous, but the roots are the most poisonous. It has a very fern or carrot like foliage and in recent years I have been seeing it show up almost anywhere including gardens, yards and landscape beds. It is a biennial meaning that it starts growing one year and then the second year it sends up a seed stalk. The rosette form of the plant can get quite large in the fall of the year, being a couple feet across and standing over a foot high. When it sends up the flower and seed stalk the second year, the seed stock can be as tall as 10 feet. Another key diagnostic feature is that the seed stalk or stem has purple spotting. It has white flowers and once it starts to bloom it has a very distinctive strong musky odor. Once the seed stalk starts to shoot up it is going to be very hard to kill and will die shortly after flowering anyway. If you have a few individual plants in your yard or garden you can dig them up. Get a trowel or tile spade and get the taproot as deep as you can! Chemical control is going to be best for large patches. Triclopyr and 2,4-D will selectively take it out of grassy areas but use caution around ornamentals. Glyphosate will work also, but only use it in pure stands as it will kill everything. Triclopyr can often be found in herbicides labeled for poison ivy or chickweed, clover or oxalis killers. Late fall is often the best time to treat this weed. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Peach Leaf Curl

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 about the time of year that home orchardists will start to bring me leaves from their peach trees that are distorted and all puckered up, often with the leaves showing red and yellow discolorations. The disease is called peach leaf curl. The leaves were infected as they emerged from the buds weeks ago. The infected leaves will eventually fall off and new leaves will develop to take their place. Most years this is no big deal as we often don't have much of a peach crop anyway. If your tree did have a lot of peaches on it, this stress could cause some of the peaches to fall off and the remaining peaches would likely be reduced in size as the tree had to use energy to develop new leaves instead of growing fruit! So what can you do about it now? Not a darn thing other than to rake up all the leaves and burn them or put them in the trash. Remember, I said that the leaves were infected just as they emerged from the bud. Controls for this disease needed to be applied in February or very early March BEFORE the buds started to swell and the leaves started to emerge. That is the only infection period for this disease. By the time you see that your tree's leaves are infected, you are literally months past the period when something could have been done. Don't waste your time or money spraying anything right now. But make a note on your calendar for December 31st. I want that note to say, "take your 2018 calendar and on February 1st write, "Treat for Peach Leaf Curl before the end of the month." If you get nice weather in January, you can even treat then. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Mushrooms!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With wet weather and warm weather come not only mosquitoes, but also mushrooms. You can call them toadstools, you can call them mushrooms, but it doesn't matter. They are the fruiting body of a fungus that is usually a wood decay organism often growing underground. A mushroom is to the fungus what an apple is to an apple tree. It contains the seed to create offspring. Mushrooms develop rapidly, often from deep underground, when temperature and moisture conditions are right. The fungal spores released from the mushroom need warm moist conditions to survive and germinate so the fungus senses when those conditions come along and quickly develop those mushrooms to take advantage of those situations. Some mushrooms are quite tasty, some are quite un-tasty, and some are poisonous even deadly poisonous. DO NOT bring me your mushrooms to find out if they are edible as I am not an expert! Often homeowners get upset when mushrooms show up in their yards. They often arise from a decay fungus working on an old stump or the large roots left when a tree died and was removed. In the long run, the fungus is doing us a favor as it breaks down the old wood and recycles the nutrients. Unfortunately there is nothing you can spray or do to stop mushrooms from showing up. All you can do is physically remove them when they do appear. The wetter and warmer it is the more you are liable to see and different species will show up throughout the summer when the conditions are right. Pluck them or kick them, or just move on! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.