

Getting Ready for Garlic Season

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. All of my regular listeners probably know by now that I'm a nut about growing garlic. It's sort of become an obsession that when I retire in a few more years could get out of hand. Regardless, mid to late October is the preferred time for planting garlic in your garden. Which means that right now you want to be busy getting ground worked up and fertilized in preparation for garlic planting. Tilling 3 to 6 inches deep provides a good mellow seed bed to plant your garlic in. Start getting your seed garlic secured now also. I am not a proponent of just buying garlic at the grocery store because you have no idea what you are getting. Trust me, garlic isn't just garlic. There are ten different types of garlic and the source that I use for my seed garlic has over 100 varieties available. Saying that garlic is just garlic is like saying that wine is just wine. Additionally, garlic can get viral diseases and fungal diseases that don't hurt it for culinary purposes but you don't want in your garden. And finally, we grow less than half the garlic in the US that we consume annually. The garlic you buy in the grocery store may have come from China! So get certified seed garlic but don't pop the cloves apart until the night before or the day of planting. Once you pop the cloves, things change within the clove and you want to get it in the ground quick. Plant with the pointed end up. Plant 6 inches apart in rows or if in a bed, on a 5 by 9 spacing. Cover with 1 to 2 inches of soil, pat firm, but don't compact, and if you want, mulch with wheat straw. Fertilize at planting and again early next spring! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Ornamental Grasses

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Even though we are likely still several weeks away from our first frost, many plants are shutting down even though they may not be showing it. I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that peonies could be cut back any time now. Ornamental grasses are a bit of an exception. Grass leaves don't form abscission layers like tree leaves do. As long as the leaf blade is green, it is carrying on photosynthesis and moving those carbohydrates to the roots. So cutting it back too early, like now, will result in the plant trying to continue to grow new leaves which will take food reserves out of the roots. You are better off to wait until well after we have some hard freezes to do anything. In fact, you don't HAVE to do anything with these grass clumps until late winter if you don't want to. It should be noted though that because of the fine nature of grass leaves and how very dry they become after freezing down in the fall, they are quite a fire hazard. If you don't think so just hang around when someone burns one of these big pampas grass clumps off in the spring. They burn fast and they burn hot - trust me! So if you have even a small clump of ornamental grass near a building, you will probably want to cut it back after it goes dormant in late October or November. I prefer to cut these grasses off an inch or two high on the smaller shorter clumps and 3 to 4 inches high on the bigger taller pampas grass types. You want to avoid cutting off at ground level as that tuft of dead grass provides good insulation for the crown of the plant and protects it against excessive cold weather. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Sunscald on young trees

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Plants can get sunburned. I know it may sound funny but fruits, vegetables and other plant parts can be sunburned or as we more correctly call it, sunscald. Thin-barked trees are very susceptible to sunscald, but what surprises most homeowners is that it usually happens in late winter, not the summer! When young trees get sunscald, you often don't know it for a year or two. All of a sudden one summer you notice that the bark on the side of your young tree is splitting and panic sets in. The sunscald killed the bark tissue and as the rest of the tree and bark grows, that dead area can't grow and eventually it splits. Trees can usually recover but require a lot of care and patience. What happens is that on sunny warm winter days, the south and southwest side of that tree trunk can warm up so much that it may be 40 degrees warmer than the shady side of the trunk. This warm weather causes the cells in the bark tissue to become active. Then the sun goes down and it gets cold and these cells become susceptible to lethal freezing temperatures. The injured area becomes sunken and discolored but is often overlooked. It's probably a good idea to use a light colored tree wrap around these young trees - usually just the first year after planting. This weatherized paper wrap should be applied from the ground up to the start of the first branches. You can buy this tree wrap at garden centers or hardware stores. This can be done in October or November. But it becomes very important to remove it in March. Leaving it on can lead to all sorts of other problems! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Bringing Plants Inside for Winter

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. While some of us are ready for winter and a good snow storm or two, many others aren't quite there yet. But cooler weather will be here soon and if you've had tropical foliage plants outside, you need to start making plans to bring them inside if you want to keep them! Moving plants from outside back into the house can be very stressful to them. Your goal is to minimize the stress on the plants and also minimize the unwelcome critters that may come along with those pots of plants. Before you bring the plants in, likely just a few days before you bring them in, water the soil with an insecticide drench. Mix up something like malathion or permethrin according to label directions for a treatment but instead of spraying it, water the plant with it. This will help get rid of fungus gnats and if the water goes clear through it will even take out the rolypolys that always manage to cling on to the bottom of the pot. Then let it air out for a few days before bringing it in. Clean all the leaf debris out of the pot before you bring it in. Since you are going from a high light environment to a low light environment don't do anything too drastic to the plant. Do not repot if just before you bring it in as you are putting extra stress on the plant to replace part of the root system at a time when you've just reduced light intensity significantly. Even a good bright window can be a 75% reduction in light intensity. Don't fertilize it when you bring it in. Again, you are stimulating the plant at the same time as you're cutting that light strength. All of those things are done in the spring not the fall! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Fall Weed Control in Lawns

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 really glad to see that rain and cooler weather in late September. The big reason is because that's what we needed to start getting all of those winter annual weeds germinated and growing. So many of the weeds that bloom in our lawns in early spring are starting to grow right now. Rains and cooler weather help those seeds realize that they need to break dormancy, germinate and grow. They are often quite small. Many homeowners don't even notice them. But if you go out where you've had weed problems before and look for areas where the grass is thin, you can often see little plants with just a couple of leaves. Don't think for a minute that those will die with freezing weather. It won't happen. Those plants will overwinter just fine and explode like gang busters next February and March. I don't usually like to treat for winter annual weeds until the latter part of October simply because until the soil cools down a little bit more, those seeds will keep germinating and I don't want you to have to spray twice. Spraying too early is why homeowners think that they have had a herbicide failure and wind up spraying again in the spring. Fall treatments in late October also have the added benefit that you don't have to worry about sensitive foliage getting curled up by the weed control products. Late October works great to apply the weed control products and that late season fertilizer application, often called the weed and feed application. Or, if you prefer the liquid approach, that'll work fine too. Just do it when the temperatures are above 50 and wind below 10. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.