

## Mulch Volcanoes

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 a big fan of mulching around trees and shrubs in landscapes. I'm also seeing a lot more people doing better at putting mulch zones around even larger trees. Mulch zones benefit our plants in many ways. Two to four inches of organic mulch help keep soil cooler and reduce water loss. They keep weeds and grass away from the base of the plants which decreases competition for moisture and nutrients and also keeps lawn mowers and weed eaters from getting in around the base of the plants and potentially damaging them! While the competition for water and nutrients is less of an issue with older trees, mulch zones around them still provide benefits in keeping lawn mowers and weed eaters away from the bark, which can still be damaged, AND the added benefit of not having to bounce a lawn mower over surface roots. Additionally, it's often a challenge to get grass to grow around the base of larger older trees because of shade. But here's what we really need to avoid - mulch volcanoes. I don't know where this started from but I've seen mulch piled a foot high around the base of a tree like a volcano. Don't do that. Mulch should be a doughnut with no mulch actually touch the base of the tree. When mulch covers up the trunk you can start to get roots growing into the mulch which can result in girdling roots later on. You can also invite insects and small rodents into this zone where then can enjoy feeding on and damaging the tender bark of the trunk. Think doughnut! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Half of April Planting

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I'll be honest, this has not been a good gardening spring. Especially if you're a gardener who really likes to get in early to garden. Soil temperatures just like air temperatures, have been a roller coaster. This is actually fairly common, it's just we haven't seen it for a few years and we've kind of forgotten what normal is like! Just to get it out right now though, this is not a year I'd be in a hurry to plant tomatoes. I don't care if you use walls of water, teepees or whatever, if tomatoes get cold shocked, you lose all the advantages you were hoping to get by planting early. Stick with that Mother's Day weekend to be safe with your tomatoes. However, we do have quite a few things that we can be planting the last half of April. Keep in mind that we are just now past the average last frost, but the frost free date isn't until about May 15<sup>th</sup>. In the last half of April we can be planting many of our leafy crops. This includes collards, swiss chard, lettuce and spinach. Root crops like carrots, salsify, onions, turnips and beets. If we hurry we can still get in crops like peas, broccoli and cauliflower. Once we get into that last week of April we can also start getting our melon crops planted but that's by seeds, not transplants. Cucumbers, pumpkins and summer squash need to wait until we get into May. They are just a tad bit more sensitive to cold weather. Winter squash need to wait until June. Sweet potatoes need to wait until late May, and peppers, tomatoes and eggplant - Mother's day weekend. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Knotweed control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There is a lawn weed known as Knotweed, that's Knot with a K, that won't ring a bell with most people but if I pointed it out to you you'd recognize it in a hurry. Knotweed starts off right now with pretty green leaves. It's often found growing thick and lush in areas along driveways or compacted soils. While it's nice and soft to the touch now, by mid-summer it's half dead, it's dry and prickly if you walk on it, it's just not a nice plant. It gets its name for the fleshy knot on the stem where the leaves come off the stem. This is a summer annual plant that starts growing early in the year. You can often find it germinating in warm weather in February or March. This year it is still germinating. It can be controlled with pre-emerge products, but you have to apply them in the fall, late October or early November. Pre-emerge products applied now will prevent additional knotweed plants from getting started but will do nothing to control the ones already growing. Fortunately, knotweed is fairly well controlled with most of our broadleaf lawn weed killers. Straight 2,4-D is fair for controlling it but the combo products like weed-b-gon, trimec, etc. are going to work very well. Anything labeled for chickweed and clover will also be effective on it. If you're a DIY kind of person then 2,4-D plus dicamba or 2,4-D with triclopyr is going to work very well. As always, read and follow label directions, spray when the wind speed is low and temperatures between 50 and 80. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Star of Bethlehem Control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I see a lot of lawns that have clumps of what looks like very coarse dark green grass. But on closer inspection the green leaves have an almost white streak up the center of the leaf and these clumps often come up with pretty little white flowers. This is star-of-bethlehem and is actually sold as a flowering bulb. The problem is that this flowering bulb doesn't like to stay put and will run away from where you planted it. Then it moves out into your lawn and multiplies and spreads even further until you get to the point where you have these little coarse dark green clumps that pop up in your yard early in the spring. Like all bulbs, after it blooms the leaves produce food that goes down into the bulbs, the foliage dies down by early summer and you forget about it. Traditional lawn weed control products are ineffective because when we are often applying them in the fall, there are no leaves to absorb the herbicide and most of the standard weed killers don't work. If you want to control it you need to treat now when they have foliage. You can use glyphosate but this will kill everything wherever you spray it. A better choice would be to try one of the products that contain the herbicide carfentrazone. Carfentrazone is most likely available in products like Weed Free Zone and Speedzone. If you have a lot, buy the concentrate to mix up and treat. If you have just a few plants you can get it in a ready to use formulation. Be sure to apply a thorough spray to all the foliage! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Pretty flowers in the lawn

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. What's that line from an old Statler Brothers song, "Counting flowers on the wall, that don't bother me at all." Maybe we can change that to "counting flowers on the lawn, gonna drive me up the wall"! The warm weather late last week caused a lot of lawns to explode into bloom and not the kind of blooms that many homeowners want. All of those flowers that are blooming out there right now, yellow dandelions, purple henbit, white speedwell and blue chickweed, started growing last fall. As dry as it was last fall, many of them likely started growing after we had that rain in early to mid October. If you applied your weed and feed products before those events, as in September, you just flat out missed the window for control. You can control them now with any of the liquid products or the weed and feed type of granular products. With the granular products, read and follow the label directions. Many of the granular products need to be applied when leaves are wet with dew or following irrigation. With liquid products, make sure that the wind is calm or light. You also want air temperatures to be above 50 degrees at treatment time to make sure weeds are actively growing so they will absorb the herbicide. But you want temperatures below 80 degrees so you don't have vapor drift to damage sensitive plants. Then, mark your calendar for late October this fall. That's when you want to apply weed control products so we don't have this problem next spring! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.