

Irrigating Lawns

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Most homeowners with in-ground irrigation systems have no idea how to set them or change the settings and most of them are set up wrong. Now that I've offended most homeowners and lawn care professionals, let me explain. Most of them run too often, at the wrong time, and don't apply enough water to be healthy to the turf. In general, during most of the summer, if we want to keep our fescue or bluegrass green and growing, which I don't agree with but anyway, we need about one inch of rainfall or irrigation per week a little more when it's really hot. Do you know how much water you are putting on? Get some empty tuna cans or rain gauges you can stick into the ground and see how much you are putting on. I'd prefer to irrigate twice a week and put on about a half inch per irrigation. Running the irrigation system every day and applying less than a quarter inch never allows deep penetration of applied water and will create a lawn with a whole lot of very shallow roots. A quarter inch of applied irrigation will only soak an inch or two into most soils. The other issue we run in to is that many irrigation systems apply water faster than the soil can absorb it. Which means that an irrigation cycle may have to run two or three times each day that it runs so that the soil has time to absorb the water. So get some rain gauges and start measuring application rates. Then learn how to adjust your system yourself so you can change it as needed or turn it off if it rains. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Crabgrass Preventers

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We have two types of weed control products. We have weed killers, products that kill weeds that are growing. Then we have weed preventers, products that stop weed seeds from germinating or kill them just as they germinate. For many of the weedy grasses that we fight in our lawns, crabgrass, foxtail and others, it is better to use a preventer. Of course, the best approach at keeping weeds out of your yard is with a thick stand of grass that is mowed at 3 to 3½ inches high. This will greatly reduce weeds of all kinds in your yard. But many of us have spots in our yards that are thin or we have troubles keeping a good stand of grass because it's next to a curb or a driveway. So this is a good reason to use crabgrass preventers. The weedy grasses that we want to control are late germinating. They won't really get started, most years until the end of April or first of May. This year it may be even later. When we apply these preventers they need to be watered in or have a half inch of rain, to get them activated. Then it may still take a week or two before they really can be effective. Because of the longer residual activity of the newer preventers, we generally don't worry about applying them too early, so you can get them applied any time now. A good rule of thumb though is to have them on your lawn by the time the redbuds start to bloom, generally by the middle of April. Then, if we don't get a rain of at least a half inch within a few days, apply some irrigation. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Don't be in a hurry with bagworm controls

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Our junipers got hammered by bagworms last year. The worst that I've seen in quite a few years. So in the weeks and months ahead you are going to be hearing more from me about bagworms than you'd really like to. I've already started to receive questions from homeowners about how soon to spray and what to use. So here's my bagworm advice for today - chill out! Bagworms overwinter as eggs in the bag that was occupied by the female bagworm. One female bagworm can lay 500 to 1,000 eggs. If you have bagworm bags on your juniper from last year you can go along and start squeezing the bags. If they just collapse with little pressure, then they contained male bagworms which have emerged, flown away and died. But if the bag is firm and plump then it held a female bagworm and it is full of eggs. The eggs won't start to hatch until late May and early June. Chemical treatments applied before the eggs hatch will not control the small bagworms. For that reason, I recommend treating junipers twice, once on June 10th and again on June 20th to the 25th. Many products are labeled for bagworms and very effective, IF they are applied with a hose end sprayer, attached to the end of a garden hose, that allows for a thorough soaking spray to the point that the spray is starting to drip off the foliage. The bagworms will be small at this time. Many homeowners won't even be sure if they have any. But IF you had bagworms on your junipers last year, even if you treated, treat again. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Growing Big Onions

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Onions aren't just onions. There's green onions, there's cooking onions, there's slicing onions. There's onion seed, onion sets and onion plants. And because of all this confusion, many gardeners wind up being disappointed with what they've got because they didn't plant the right kind of onions or take care of them the right way. If you want big slicing onions for onion rings or to put on hamburgers, then here's what you want to do. It's too late to start your own onions from seed. For all onions, they need to be planted now, through about April 25th. Onion sets, the dry little bulbs, are going to be sold by color, not by variety. You don't want those. You want onion plants of a named cultivar. Intermediate-day onions are best suited for Kansas (just in case you're looking online or in a catalog and you see that designation). Good large bulbed onion varieties would be Candy, Red Candy Apple or Super Star. Onions have a shallow root system so need good even moisture and adequate fertilizer. Prior to planting apply 1 pound of a balanced fertilizer like a 10-10-10 per 100 square feet. This can be tilled into the soil or just surface applied. Then plant your onions about 4 inches apart in rows 12 inches apart. About 3 weeks after the onions have come up, fertilize with a high nitrogen fertilizer such as two pounds of nitrate of soda, 16-0-0, per 100 foot of row or a herbicide free lawn fertilizer like 27-3-3 at the rate of one pound per foot of row. Water weekly if it doesn't rain. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Apple 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. Apples, perhaps more so than any other home fruit, are most likely to be severely impacted by diseases and insect pests. We need to protect apple leaves from apple scab and cedar apple rust and the fruit from codling moths. Codling moths are the adult of the worm that we find burrowing through apples. The fungicide myclobutanil will control both diseases. The fungicides Immunox and F-stop both contain this ingredient and both are labeled for apple trees. Apply your first spray of this when leaves appear. When the petals drop and the small apples are just starting to form you'll need to apply another fungicide treatment mixed with a labeled fruit tree spray such as malathion, Bonide Fruit Tree Spray, Bonide Fruit Tree and Plant Guard or Ortho Flower, Fruit & Vegetable Insect killer. There is a biological control that is very effective against codling moth, but it is very expensive right now. After the petal drop spray, treat about every 10 days up through June 1st. After June 1 rust is no longer an issue and you can switch to just Bonide Fruit Tree Spray or Bonide Fruit Tree and Plant Guard. These both have a combination of insecticide and fungicide and the fungicide is adequate to control apple scab. You may have to use combinations of these because they all have certain limits of how many times they can be used per season. Continue spraying about every two weeks unless it's very rainy, then spray once a week, until two weeks before harvest or mid-August. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.