

Almost Lawn Grass Planting Season

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Had I known that we were going to hit several days the latter half of August with some rain and cooler weather, I might have snuck out and got some grass seed planted in my lawn. While we occasionally do get good seeding conditions the last half of August, I always say that you need to be ready to irrigate if you plant grass seed before September 1. We are quickly running up on that traditional sweet time for planting lawn grass. Yes, you can probably start planting anytime now but let's remember a few basic things to get a new seeding or overseeding off to a good start. First of all, the seed has to be in the soil. There are very few and very specific occasions where just spreading grass seed on the surface will work satisfactorily. The easiest way that I've found is to use a power seeder that allows you to plant right through existing vegetation and residue. You can also rototill the seedbed to bare soil, sow your seed and rake it in but that is a lot of work! If you aren't certain of soil fertility levels be sure to apply some starter fertilizer at a level not to exceed 1 pound of nitrogen or 2 pounds of phosphorus per 1,000 square feet. Once the seed is in the ground you can wait for rain. But once that seed starts to germinate and grow, it needs to be kept moist to insure that it keeps growing. If a seed starts to germinate and then dries out, it is dead and no additional water is going to revive it. Start mowing as soon as it's three inches tall and hold off on herbicides for 3 mowings. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Recommended Tall Fescue Cultivars

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The type of lawn grass I most often recommend is improved tall fescue. For years we were stuck with K-31 tall fescue and while it is still an okay, lower cost option for large low maintenance areas, assuming it isn't contaminated with orchard grass, the new improved cultivars are going to be much preferred for areas closer to the house and homeowners that prefer a higher quality looking lawn. Hundreds of tall fescue cultivars have been tested in trials all across the country over the years. The results are compiled and kept track of over the years. It is unlikely that you will find any of the cultivars in a pure seed lot. Most of the time you will find blends with 4 to 6 cultivars included. Most of the blends will have at least a couple of these cultivars included. Just read the fine print on the tag. Every sample of seed HAS to say what is in it and remember, only chose those that have 0% other crop seed listed. The top performing cultivars in the most recent trials include: Rebounder, Michelangelo, Traverse 2, Black Tail, Reflection, GTO, Thor, Paramount, Temple, Valkyrie LS, Avenger II, Technique, 4th Millennium SRP, Rockwell, Titanium 2LS, Rowdy, Regenerate, Leonardo, Falcon V, Firebird 2, Terrano, Maestro, Grande 3, Bloodhound and Hot Rod. There are many others that will do as well but they may have rated just slightly lower. And since you probably won't remember more than about one of these names, give me a call at the office for the complete list of cultivars! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Recommended Bluegrass Cultivars

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 recommended tall fescue cultivars so it only makes sense that today I talk about the second preferred turf grass, Kentucky bluegrass. As with tall fescue there are so many cultivars that it is impossible to include everyone that will work because they aren't all in the trial tests. With bluegrass we need to qualify what level of maintenance we are using. High maintenance lawns will receive 4 to 5 pounds/1000 of nitrogen fertilizer per year as well as regular irrigation in heat and drought. Low maintenance will have just 1 to 2 pounds and allowed to go dormant in heat and drought. For high maintenance lawns, cultivars to consider would be: Alexa II, Aura, Award, Bewitched, Barrister, Belissimo, Beyond, Diva, Everest, Everglade, Excursion, Ginney II, Granite, Impact, Midnight, NuChicago, NuGlade, NuDestiny, Rhapsody, Rhythm, Rugby, Skye, Solar Eclipse, STR 2485, Sudden Impact, Washington and Zinfandel. For lower maintenance consider Baron, Baronie, Caliber, Canterbury, Dragon, Eagleton, Envicta, Kenblue, North Star, and South Dakota. You rarely find Kentucky bluegrass as a pure source single cultivar unless you are buying it in the hundreds of pounds category so simply look for Kentucky bluegrass blends that have a couple of these listed. Remember, bluegrass will go dormant quicker than fescue, but survive longer periods of drought. Since no one will remember those names, just look for the script from this program on line or call me. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Pear Harvest

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As much as I like fresh fruit, probably my favorite homegrown fresh fruit are pears. Pears, like apples, probably come in second behind tart cherries for being the most reliable home fruit in our area. I will let you know that unless you've been watering the heck out of your fruit trees, the fruit will be smaller this year because of the dry conditions and early heat. If you haven't been watering your fruit trees, there is still time to do so and it will also help provide a boost for bloom bud development for next year. Pears, especially species like the popular Bartlett pear, should not be allowed to become fully ripe on the tree as they will develop grit cells in the flesh. Pears and I'm talking European pears here, not Asian pears, have several ways to indicate it's time to harvest them and move them indoors for final ripening. Look for a change in background skin color from dark green to light green or yellowish green. Fruit should part easily from the branch when it's lifted up and twisted. If you are breaking the branch, it isn't ready yet. Look for the corking over of the lenticels. These are the little white specks on the surface of the fruit. As the fruit nears maturity these turn from a white or greenish white color to a brown color. Lastly, you can always sacrifice an occasional fruit and cut it open. As it nears maturity it will develop the characteristic pear aroma and taste. Once you pick them and bring them inside, keep them cool and they should ripen in 1 to 3 weeks and be of higher quality! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Harvesting Winter Squash

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Winter squash is a broad category of vegetables that encompasses things like acorn, butternut, hubbard and we can include spaghetti squash in that as well. Unlike our summer squash that we harvest and use at a very immature growth stage, we want our winter squash to be totally ripe. We use both skin color and rind toughness to determine ripeness. When a winter squash is ripe, the rind should be very tough and difficult to penetrate with a fingernail. If your fingernail goes right into the skin, it's not ripe yet. Many winter squash are very short seasoned so even though it isn't autumn yet, if you planted them early, they may very well already be ripe. Color is also a good indicator. Spaghetti squash should be a golden yellow to a dark yellow in color. In all the winter squash pay close attention to the ground color - that's the color of the skin where it sits on the ground. Butternut squash goes from light beige, often with green streaks to a dark tan color when ripe. Acorn is always green but it goes to a deep green and the ground spot changes from yellow to orange. Hubbard will be gray or orange when it is ripe. Also, the stem should not drip much moisture after a ripe squash is picked. Ideally winter squash are kept in cool temperatures with elevated humidity. Perfect conditions would be 55 to 60 degrees with 50 to 70% humidity but usually just cool room temperatures will work. Depending on species, storage life will be five weeks to six months. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.