

Gardening with Chuck Programs for December 10 - 16, 2018

Using Old Garden Seed

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I certainly hope that you are taking advantage of this wintery weather to be cleaning out your garage or basement of old packages of garden seed. Garden seed isn't that expensive and it should probably be tossed at the end of every season. But let's face it, some gardeners have a wee bit of hoarder instinct and they hate to pull up a zucchini plant that's still producing or toss out old garden seed. Any seed that's in the carrot family, including parsley and parsnips, just needs to be thrown out at the end of the year. But if you have a lot of other seed lots you can always test the germination. Roll 10 seeds in a moist paper towel, place it in a plastic bag with a few holes and place in a warm location. Check every week to see how they've germinated. If it's better than 70% germination then you can use them in 2019. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Mouse Damage on Fruit Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. This is the kind of year that we can see mouse damage on small trees, especially fruit trees. If we have several inches of snow that surrounds the base of fruit trees we can have mice use this protection to tunnel up to the base of the trees and eat off the tender bark. Dead grass and weeds around the base of small trees just adds to that protection. Before we have more snow, go out and carefully rake or mow that dead vegetation away. Then get a 2 foot piece of PVC pipe that's big enough to allow a mouse trap that is set inside to close if it is sprung. Place and secure the PVC near the base of trees you want to protect then set a mousetrap inside far enough in that pets can't get to it. Baiting with peanut butter may help. Check the traps about once a week. Once trees reach bearing age they aren't at risk. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Bush Honeysuckle

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I talked about bush honeysuckle last week and since then I've seen a lot of areas in woodlands that are just full of bushes covered with little red berries. Walk your own woodlands and yard and look for these bushes. This winter would be a great time to start working on removing these plants. Cut them off at or near ground level and immediately treat that cut surface with concentrated glyphosate, at least 20% active ingredient - check the label. A foam paint brush is a good way to do this OR an applicator with a precision type nozzle to place the herbicide only on the cut stump especially around the edge of larger stumps. Then follow up next spring to look for any regrowth coming up from the stumps. Spray these with a 1 to 2% solution of glyphosate being careful not to get the spray on desirable plants in the area. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Controlling Unwanted Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Thanks to the birds and the wind we always seem to have a lot of volunteer trees in our yards. Sometimes these trees get a couple inch diameter trunk before we get around to cutting them down. A tree that size won't die just because you cut it off. You need to treat the trunk with a herbicide within a few minutes of cutting it off. Winter is a good time to do this, basically anytime from now through February. In landscapes this time of year I find good success using concentrated triclopyr or concentrated glyphosate, meaning at least 20% glyphosate. Make sure the air temperature is above freezing and then use a paintbrush to apply the product just to the cut surface. Avoid over application or spilling it onto desirable nearby vegetation. A small paintbrush, especially a foam brush works great for this purpose. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Ice and Snow on Shrubs? Leave them alone!

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We've already had several snowfall events and there is still a lot of winter left. One thing that can happen with storms that bring us snow and ice is that this frozen precipitation can weigh down trees and shrubs, especially evergreen shrubs with heavy snow, or everything if it's ice. Many homeowners feel compelled to try to remove this burden from the plants. The problem is that their well meaning attempts can wind up doing far more harm than good, and in the case of ice even put themselves at risk from breaking and falling limbs. When these storms happen you just need to leave the plants alone. They have a great ability to bend with the weight and recover just fine after the storm is over, none the worse for the storm. I suspect that doing nothing is harder on the gardener's ego than on the shrubs! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.