

## Gardening with Chuck Programs for December 3 - 9, 2018

### Poinsettia Care

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Poinsettias are a very popular holiday season plant. They are a tropical woody shrub and don't like cold weather so cover and protect them bringing them home from the store. They prefer 65 to 75 degrees during the day and 60 to 65 at night. Keep them away from temperatures over 75 degrees and cold drafts like around windows, move them at night or pull the drapes. Poinsettias are picky about soil moisture conditions. As soon as you get the plant home, punch holes in the decorative foil so there is good drainage. Constantly soggy soil will cause root rot, letting the soil dry out till it starts to wilt will cause the leaves to start to drop off. Stick your finger ½ inch into the soil every day and when it is dry at that level, water the plant with lukewarm water, allowing excess to drain out into a saucer or sink. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Poinsettia's aren't poisonous

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Poinsettias are in the Euphorbia genus of plants and many species in this genus are well known to be poisonous to humans and animals. So for years, decades in fact, it was commonly accepted that poinsettias were poisonous and many families wouldn't have one because they had small children. What we have since found it is that while there may be an allergic reaction to the sap, there has never been a recorded case of poisoning from poinsettias. It is now accepted that exposure to the sap either topically or through ingestion produces no effect or at the worst very rare cases of vomiting. So if you've been reluctant to have a poinsettia in your home because of children or even houseplant munching pets, there is no longer a reason to hesitate. While the plant may not be tasty to eat, it isn't a hazard to children or pets! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Bushes with bright red berries

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I have had a lot of questions this fall about the medium to large shrub that is covered with lots of bright red berries and often holding their leaves until the most recent cold weather. In most cases I suspect the people asking this questions wanted to plant one in their yard. Here's the problem. The plant is bush, Amur, or Tartarian honeysuckle, basically all the same, and it is becoming a very nasty invasive plant. The birds do love the berries which they consume and then proceed to plant every time they stop and lift their tail. It proliferates in the under story of woodlands and crowds out all the native plants. If you have one or more of these in your yard, please cut it down and treat the stump with Tordon RTU or concentrated glyphosate (at least 20% active ingredient). Be persistent and get it killed! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Time to just give it up

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Gardeners are a plucky lot. They'll keep trying to do things around the yard in the fall until there's either nothing left to do, or the conditions just won't allow it any longer. While there are still things that we often could be doing in the yard, I think it's time to just give it up for this fall. We've already had four measurable snowfall events and it's only the first week of December. Soil temperatures are down below 40. Essentially, the ground is cold and wet. It's too wet to try dormant seeding of grass. The groves that the power seeder would make won't close back over the seed. The last day to try to apply weed control in yards was probably the day after Thanksgiving. Just about the only thing left for you to do is maybe rake up heavy layers of leaves if they aren't covered with snow. And then just start the wait for spring. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Be careful using deicers

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. With the snows we've already seen this year we have seen more deicers applied by early December than we probably did the whole winter season in the past 4 winters. Keep in mind that deicers work because they are salt based. Salt, especially a lot of salt, can cause problems for plants as they can destroy soil structure and build up in soil making it very unhealthy for plants. You can use nitrogen fertilizer in place of other deicers, but again they are salts also. Minimize how much deicer of any kind you use. Allow time for deicers to work - don't expect instant results. If possible, shovel what you can off the walks and then wait for the sunshine to come out which is the best deicer you can ask for. If you need to clear a path in a hurry, then take the time to sweep up and remove the excess salt later. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.