

Nutsedge issues

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When I was learning plant identification there was a little poem that we learned to help separate grasses from grass like plants. "Sedges have edges and rushes are round. Grasses have joints wherever they're found". We generally don't have rushes in our yards, unless you live near a wetland, but sedges and grasses are regularly found in yards. Sedges are not a grass and the "sedges have edges" line from the poem comes from the fact that sedges have triangular stems. If you have a stem of sedge and roll it in your fingers, that triangular stem with flat spots and edges becomes very obvious. Sedges differ from grasses in that not only do they have seed, they also have little bulblets under the soil surface that often leads to the other common name, nutsedge. If you pull up a sedge plant, you will kill the mother plant but all the daughter bulbs will dislodge, stay in the soil and once the mother plant is gone, these dormant bulbs will start growing. You killed one plant and started several more. Spot treatment with glyphosate can work, but overspray will leave obvious dead spots in your yard. There are sedge specific treatments that work pretty well and if you are finding sedges in your yard right now, you can treat them with one of the nutsedge killers. However, next year, late May or early June you will probably need to treat again. Late summer treatment doesn't do as good a job of killing the daughter bulbs so you'll just need to do a second treatment late next spring.

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Cantaloupe or Muskmelon - Is there a difference?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Do you ever have those intense arguments in your family about whether those orange fleshed melons should be called muskmelon or cantaloupe?

Okay, maybe that's just my family. In general usage, at least in the United States, the term is interchangeable, but botanically speaking, there is a difference. Technically, cantaloupe refers to two varieties of muskmelon. In other words, all cantaloupe are muskmelons but not all muskmelons are cantaloupes. What we generally grow and consume here in the US is North American Cantaloupe, or *Cucumis melo reticulatus*. The variety name, *reticulatus* refers to the net like appearance on the skin of the fruit. Botanists refer to this pattern as reticulated. The other cantaloupe variety is the European cantaloupe, variety name *cantalupensis*, it has a ribbed light green skin and looks vastly different than the North American cantaloupe, but you have probably seen it in the produce section at times. All muskmelons, including our cantaloupe, were native to Persia. The muskmelon has pictorial records back to about 2400 B.C. from Egypt and was documented in Greece by 300 B.C. By the late 15th century it was across much of Europe and seeds were carried by Christopher Columbus to the New World. Muskmelon was slow to catch on in the new world partly because fruit flavor quality can be variable, a problem home gardeners still fight with today. But, at least here in the US, you can call them muskmelon or cantaloupe!

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Fall Garden Planting

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The fall garden seeding season is well underway. If you hurry you can still get beans, cabbage and maybe even potatoes planted - with potatoes being planted the first of August you'll probably be okay as long as we don't have an early hard freeze. Early August is still in prime time for planting beets, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, endive and kale. All of those cole crops can be a challenge though as it's tough to find transplants. I was talking with one greenhouse recently and they said they just quit carrying transplants in summer because people weren't buying them. If you seem to have troubles finding the transplants you can always start your own but be advised it's going to take these cole crops, cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower, 6 to 8 weeks to go from seed to transplantable size. In other words, too late for this year unless you're going to use hoop houses. You probably need to be starting your own transplants in early June. Mark your calendar for next year. I previously mentioned beets and kale. These can be seeded from now through about the 15th or 20th of August. Once we get to the middle of August we can also start planting lettuce, radishes, spinach and turnips. These can all be seeded anytime from mid August to about mid September. As always, summer planting of the fall garden brings special challenges. Many of these are small seeded species that are planted shallowly so regular, as in daily or twice daily, watering may be needed to get them up and going. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Sprinkler system mis-adjustments

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 it every year and it becomes most obvious in hotter drier years. Homeowners spend good money on in-ground sprinkler systems and by mid summer the lawns just aren't keeping up to what they expected given the money that they spent on the system and for the water. There are really two extremes to the problems I see of sprinkler misadjustment. The first is where there is way too much water being applied. Two things to look for are water literally running off the lawn over the curb and into the gutter hours after the system shut off. The second is where you walk across the lawn 6 hours after watering and you can still hear the squishing of saturated soil. These lawns are being way over-watered. The second one is where the lawn or part of the lawn just isn't staying green and growing. Quite often you get a target like appearance where the closer you get to the sprinkler, the greener it is. In this case the sprinkler heads were not correctly sized and/or the system just isn't being run long enough. In all of these cases it points out the need to know how much water is really being applied how often. Rain gauges stuck in the ground around the lawn or straight sided tin cans placed in the yard can be used to collect water for measuring. If about a half inch of water isn't being applied per sprinkling, then you aren't getting enough on. If a total of more than 1.5 inches is being applied per week, you are over-watering. Then there's the issue of sprinklers running in the afternoon, don't! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Long Term Drought Damage to Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With the amount of drought that we've gone through in the past 12 months, it's going to take more than a few nice rains to turn things around. Given the soil moisture deficit that we are at it's going to take at least 12 if not 24 months of average rainfall to get that corrected. Earlier this decade we saw multiple years of extreme drought in the western half of the state. We saw Siberian elm and eastern red cedars dying because of the lack of rainfall. These are two species that are well known for being drought tolerant. But the moisture deficit simply became too great. When plants become extremely drought stressed for multiple years you see branches starting to die. You see foliage pull back on branches or there simply is very little or no new growth in the spring. The plant is literally trying to make itself smaller so it can survive on far less water. Unfortunately this level of stress starts to make the plant attractive to insect or disease pests that wouldn't normally be a problem. The combination of insect, disease and environmental stress becomes too much and the plant dies. We could be at that level if things don't start to straighten out. In landscape settings we have the option of careful watering to keep stress from occurring or to lessen the stress. It's to the point that I don't care what species you have. If it's a tree or shrub you don't want to lose, start watering it. Don't use a root waterer but an open hose running at a slow trickle under the plant for hours. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.