

Brown Patch in Lawns

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. That wonderful summer weather arrived about six weeks before summer actually did. What we unfortunately run into here is those wonderful summer nights when the temperature never gets below 70 degrees. We've had several nights recently when the temperatures only got down to about 75. Not only is that uncomfortable but it can also lead to a lawn disease known as brown patch. Brown patch is most common on tall fescue lawns. It is favored by night time temperatures over 70 degrees and high humidity and/or a thin film of moisture on the leaf surface. This can be moisture from dew, from rain, or from late day lawn irrigation. The disease can develop in less than 48 hours. It first appears as water soaked spots on leaves usually with a dark brown edge or margin of the spot. The disease can progress rapidly killing the leaves and leaving dead looking spots in lawns. In rare occasions the disease will move into and attack the crown thereby killing the plant. Usually though, before the disease gets that bad, cooler weather returns and the grass recovers. Brown patch can be suppressed by application of any one of numerous different fungicides. In severe situations the disease will still show up. Prevention can help by not watering at night or going easy on the fertilizer. Once the disease gets cranked up though you are better off to just ride it out. Unirrigated lawns are unlikely to get it and good old K-31 is about the only thing with tolerance to it. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Bagworms

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Are you tired of me talking about bagworms yet? I know I'm tired of talking about bagworms. But I'm going to keep hammering on it for a few more weeks. We are right in the heart of bagworm treatment time. I'm continuing to see damage all over town as I drive down the street. In all my years of being a county agent I have never seen bagworms this bad and this widespread. I've got them on my blue spruce, on junipers, oaks, maples, elms, I even have them on my apple trees and the little buggers are eating the apple surface off of the small green fruit. I sprayed mine last week but I'll bet a fourth of them have feeding damage on them and I'm not sure how that'll impact fruit development. Here's the crucial thing you need to be aware of. Bagworms are less than a half inch long right now. They are easy to overlook. But their feeding damage is very obvious. Blue spruces are showing light brownish needles where they are feeding. All of the deciduous trees that I've seen them on have obvious holes now in the leaves. Don't look for big two inch long bagworm bags, look for damage and little bags. Spray with just about any lawn and garden insecticide but make sure that you are using a hose end sprayer that applies a lot of carrier. You want to spray the infested tree thoroughly to the point of almost dripping off. It's important to soak down those little bags that the rascals hide in. If you had bagworms last year, spray again. If you didn't, check your trees anyway! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Blossom End Rot in tomatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I'm expecting the first call any day now, although we may be a week early just yet. The call starts out with, "I was looking at my tomatoes this morning and I noticed that some of them have some sort of rot on the bottom of them." We go through this every year and given the weather I have a bad feeling that this year is going to be worse than usual. This is known as blossom end rot but it has nothing to do with a disease organism. While commonly occurring in tomatoes it can also occur in peppers, eggplants, squash and watermelons. The sunken and shriveled area at the bottom or blossom end of the fruits is caused by a calcium deficiency in the blossom end of the fruit. Now hold on a minute before you rush out and add calcium to your garden. Our soils have plenty of calcium. The calcium deficiency is caused by different issues such as moisture fluctuation, rapidly growing plants and or fruit, drought and heat stress. It is generally going to be an early season problem that will stop as the plant develops a bigger root system on into the season. There's a few things you can do to reduce blossom end rot. First of all keep soil moisture constant, but don't drown the plant. Use organic mulches to cool the soil and reduce moisture loss. Use nitrate sources of nitrogen such as nitrate of soda, or calcium nitrate. If you are hoeing, do so shallowly so as not to damage roots. You want the roots to grow and catch up with the rest of the plant so just take it easy on them! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Tomato Leaf Spot Diseases

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 blossom end rot in tomatoes so let's just segue right into the other common tomato problem we see every year and that's the tomato leaf spot diseases. We have a couple of leaf spot diseases that are very common on tomatoes. One is called early blight and the other one is called septoria leaf spot. Both cause brown spots on leaves. Early blight usually occurs earlier in the season with larger spots that have a target like look with concentric rings. Septoria occurs later and the spots are smaller. This is the one that starts knocking leaves off the bottom of the plant and just work's it's way up the plant as the season goes on. Both of these fungal diseases can be reduced in severity by allowing adequate room around the plant for air movement to dry the leaves and then to use an irrigation method that keeps the leaves dry. In other words don't use a sprinkler but use drip hoses or soaker hoses. Since falling water also splashes the spores from one leaf up to the next, use mulch on the ground. Rotating the tomatoes will also reduce the incidence of the disease. There is no resistance to either of these and you will likely need to spray. Chlorothalonil is good and you can spray today and pick tomorrow. Mancozeb will also work well but you have to wait five days after treatment before picking fruit. It is important to spray the undersides of the leaves as well as the tops as this disease can attack from either the top or the bottom of the leaf surface. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

How dry is it?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. In a nutshell, it is dry. For the year to date, it is drier than it has been at anytime since 1966. Drier than the 1950s, drier than even the 1930s were around here. As often happens with drought, it's accompanied with hotter than normal temperatures. The combination can be a real problem for lawns, landscapes and gardens. If you want to let your lawn go dormant, that's fine. Just stay off of it with about everything to keep from harming the crowns of the grass plants. It may look a little ragged, but sometimes doing nothing is the best thing to do. If you are watering, anything, you can't apply enough water to get the kind of soaking you need holding on to a hose UNLESS all you are doing is watering a potted plant and then you need to fill that pot up and let it soak through. It takes an inch of applied water to soak up 6 inches of soil. Your spritzing a flower bed with a handheld hose and any kind of nozzle is not likely to be doing any good at all. In fact, all you are doing is wetting the leaves to make them more susceptible to leaf diseases. If you are watering a tree or shrub, turn the hose on a slow trickle and leave it under the plant for several hours. For gardens or flower beds, use a drip hose or if possible, irrigate down the row. Again, sprinklers waste a lot of water and get foliage unnecessarily wet. Don't water lawns in the middle of the day or the evening. That's a perfect recipe for disease. It's dry and you need to apply water like you mean it to make a difference! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.