

Harvesting Garlic

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Probably a surprise to many of you, but I haven't talked about garlic for a while. For those of you new to my show, let's just say that I'm a little obsessed with growing garlic - I just keep growing more and more kinds every year. The month of May was not kind to this year's garlic crop. The heat and dry weather was very hard on the garlic. I harvested my first cultivar last Wednesday, probably 2 to 3 weeks earlier than what I'd planned on. Granted, it was the earliest variety I had planted but the bulbs were probably only 2/3 the size I'd prefer to see. Many people suggest treating garlic like onions and harvesting when the leaves are all dead and the tops flopped over. This is not the appropriate way to treat garlic. Don't walk the tops down like you do with onions and don't wait until the tops have fallen over and the leaves all turned brown. Doing this is just asking to get decay organisms into the bulb. Garlic should be harvested when there are still several green leaves left on the plant. Generally, you want to harvest when there are five to six green leaves left. Because of the heat, I'm in the middle of harvest right now and will have the rest of it harvested within the week. Last year I harvested on June 17th but I only had one cultivar. This year I have 10 cultivars so things are spread out a little bit more. Once the garlic is out of the ground, carefully knock loose dirt off the bulbs and tie 10 to 12 plants together with twine, and hang in a warm dry place to finish drying down. 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. All of you with cedars and junipers that have fought bagworms in the past, it's time to unleash the hounds! Bagworms can be a devastating insect pest of primarily junipers, commonly called cedars, and other evergreens, most notably spruces. If you had bagworms on your junipers last year, even if you sprayed, I'd suggest spraying again this year. Invariably there's always one or two bagworms that get missed in anyone year, especially if they were large when you treated. If those missed bagworms happened to be a female, then she likely filled that bag up with several hundred eggs last fall. The eggs started hatching a week or so ago and given all the extra warmth most eggs should have hatched by now. Small bagworms are easy to kill with most commonly used lawn and garden insecticides. The key is to use some kind of hose end sprayer to apply a thorough soaking spray. You want the spray to basically be just starting to drip off the foliage. Then wait about two weeks and treat again. Many products today come in their own hose end sprayer which makes it easy to attach it to the garden hose and spray. The applicator does the mixing for you. Spinosad is one product that works very well, possibly the best but there are several others! If you haven't had bagworms, keep a close eye on your junipers as bagworms have been increasing the past couple of years. Bagworms right now are small and you are likely to see junipers changing colors if infested. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Thatch Layers

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Thatch is something that many homeowners and lawn-aholics talk about and fear but most homeowners don't understand. They don't understand where it comes from, why it can be a problem or when to do something about it. Thatch is a collection of organic material that develops on top of the soil in lawns. It's that simple. Many homeowners dethatch their lawns every year not knowing whether they have a thatch problem or not. Contrary to popular belief though, it rarely comes from not bagging lawn clippings when you mow. Lawn clippings tend to be very high in water content, and break down quickly. Thatch is actually a buildup of compressed surface roots, stems and runners. Thatch isn't in new lawns. Thatch isn't going to build up in one year. It takes several years to develop a thatch issue. Any grass species can develop a thatch problem but tall fescue is the least likely to do so of the grasses we grow in our area. Several things can increase thatch buildup and top of that list is frequent light watering and heavy fertilization with fast release nitrogen fertilizers. Frequent light watering, as in running the sprinklers every morning, tends to focus moisture and thereby root development at the surface. Thatch layers of less than a half inch are actually beneficial. You can slice down through your lawn and peel back a corner of turf to see if you have a thatch layer. If you do then consider de-thatching or core aerating in early September prior to fall fertilizing.

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Proper Watering

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 was talking about thatch layers and how frequent light irrigation can really build up a thatch layer. How do you know if you are watering improperly? To start with, if your sprinklers are set to come on every day, you aren't doing it right! Most lawns are going to use about an inch of water per week. In really hot dry weather MAYBE an inch and a half. Infrequent deep irrigations will do a lot more for your lawn because they keep the crucial 4 to 6 inch layer of your lawn wet which encourages deeper rooting by your grasses. If you aren't putting on a half inch of water per irrigation, you aren't applying enough. If you don't have any idea how much water you are applying, then you really need to become more aware of your sprinkler system. Put out rain gauges or straight sided containers like tuna or cat food cans. Then take a ruler and measure how much water is applied after the system shuts down. Because of the clay nature of many of our soils you may have to run through a cycle several times to get that half inch applied without causing excessive runoff. But the first step is to find out how much water you are applying! When to water is just as important as how often. Nothing annoys me more than to be driving home after 5 in the afternoon and seeing sprinkler systems running. It does no good to run the sprinkler to try to cool plants. That isn't necessary and it wastes water. Water early in the morning so plants dry off quickly to reduce disease risk. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Sidedressing Vegetable and Flower gardens

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. For numerous reasons you basically can not apply fertilizer on your vegetable or flower garden once in the spring and be done with it. Granted, if you have very high levels of nitrogen in the soil you might be able to get by with that, or not fertilizing at all, but generally most of our gardens aren't like that. Nitrogen and phosphorus are very crucial nutrients for our gardens. Phosphorus levels can be built up and it is a nutrient that is not likely to disappear quickly as it is quite stable once it's in the soil. Nitrogen, however, is a different story. It is quite reactive in the soil depending on moisture and temperature conditions. It can be attacked by bacteria under warm and wet conditions and be turned to ammonia or other gaseous forms and leave the ground as a vapor. It can be attacked by other organisms and turned into nitrate which then moves readily in soil moisture and can leach right out the bottom of the rooting zone. If you have rainy conditions or when it's dry your are irrigating a lot, you will lose nitrogen. To make sure that flowers and vegetables have adequate nitrogen we often apply fertilizer during the growing season. This is commonly called sidedressing or topdressing. We are usually focusing on just nitrogen using something like nitrate of soda, ammonium sulfate, blood meal or urea. But you can also use a standard balanced fertilizer like 10-10-10 or 13-13-13. How much you apply varies by product but aim to apply about 1 pound of N per 1,000 sq ft per treatment. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.