

Asparagus Bed Care

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As of last weekend my asparagus wasn't poking through the ground yet, but before long it will be. I'm actually kind of relieved to see those chilly days following a few days of unusually warm weather. Bring spring along slowly, not too fast! If you have not gotten all the old growth from last year removed from your asparagus beds, do it now. It won't be too long before those new shoots will be coming above ground. Clip that stuff off at ground level and get it out of the area. We don't have a lot of asparagus diseases, but those that we do have overwinter on old foliage so get it moved out of the area, and preferably burned to reduce the incidence of disease. Weed control in asparagus beds we will talk about tomorrow. The other thing that we need to do right now is to get the asparagus fertilized. Asparagus can be a heavy nutrient user and can respond very favorably to good fertilizer applications and conversely low or no fertilizer applications will lead to skinnier stalks and poor production. Apply fertilizer prior to emergence and water in if it doesn't rain in a few days. Apply 1 to 2 pounds of a 10-20-10 or 1½ pounds of a 12-12-12 fertilizer per 20 feet of row which works out to be about 40 to 50 square feet of asparagus bed. If you have a bare soil bed you can also rake that fertilizer in to the soil. If you have other vegetation growing there, definitely listen to tomorrow's program. Normal harvest season is going to be four weeks for a young bed, 6 weeks for an established bed. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Weed Control in Asparagus Beds

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Grass and weeds can be a real detriment to fertilizer beds, sucking up nutrients before the much deeper rooted asparagus has a chance to utilize it and simply crowding out the asparagus. If you have weeds and grass invading your asparagus bed, hurry out there before the spears come above ground and spray with glyphosate, commonly sold as Roundup or Kleenup. As long as there are no new green asparagus spears coming up you don't have to worry about any damage. I would treat the entire bed plus about a one foot barrier around the bed. Immediately follow this up with an application of a garden weed preventer. Trifluralin is a common active ingredient but not all trifluralin products are labeled for asparagus. Miracle-Gro Weed Preventer Granules and Monterey Vegetable and Ornamental Weed Preventer both are. You can also use organic mulches to help suppress weed growth. There are no herbicides labeled for use during the harvest season. But at the end of the harvest season, generally six weeks long with established beds, you can cut back all the above ground spears and ferns and treat with glyphosate again and retreat with the weed preventer products. Also fertilize again at this time. AS the summer progresses, if you have grassy weeds move into the bed, like crabgrass or foxtail, you can treat with a grassy weed killer like sethoxydim. This active ingredient is found in Monterey Grass Getter and Hi Yield Grass Killer. Read and follow all label directions. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Frost Tolerance of Apricots and Peaches

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I saw my first apricot tree in bloom last week.

This is about a month later than I've seen in recent years, but still way too early to expect good fruit production. This is the inherent problem with trying to grow apricot trees for fruit production, although they do make beautiful ornamentals. When fruit trees are getting ready to bloom or are blooming, a mere 32 degrees won't kill the blossoms, fortunately. It also isn't an all or nothing situation. Blossom kill occurs over a range of temperatures and we generally feel that it takes about 2 hours at the critical temperature for damage to really be done. For apricot trees in full bloom, blossom death starts to occur at about 27 degrees. A couple of hours at that temperature is going to result in 10% blossom kill. If it drops down to 22 degrees, we can expect 90% blossom kill. Peaches are also somewhat precocious and also see damage during full bloom stating at 27 degrees but 90% blossom kill occurs at 24 degrees. A little bit tighter window.

Blooms don't all come out at the same time though so you often have later blossoms that may escape damage if we only have one night of freezing weather. There are all sorts of attempts made to protect blossoms from freezing but I seriously question how much it is worth trying.

There are some peach and apricot cultivars that are more cold hardy and later, although it may be just incremental changes. Site selection when planting can do as much good as anything else.

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Adding Organic Matter in the spring to gardens

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. In this part of Kansas we have tough soils. They aren't kind soils. They aren't easy soils to work with. For the most part, they have very high clay content UNLESS you happen to live on a river or creek bottom in which case you may be blessed with some well drained silty soil, or the other extreme, sandy soils. But for most of us, the word clay is going to be used somewhere in the description of the soils that we are going to garden in. Regardless of your soil type, even if you are in the minority of having nice silty soils, all soils will benefit from regular additions of organic matter. Organic matter, NOT sand, is the one thing that, over time, will improve the tilth of these clay soils. Don't waste your time and money adding gypsum. It does no good on our soils. Add organic matter. Add it in the spring, add it in the fall. As long as the organic matter isn't from a black walnut or pecan tree, I don't care what it is from. Compost is a good source. Well rotted manure is a good source. Rotten silage from a cattle farm works as does dried down grass clippings or leaves raked off of the lawn. All of them will work. In the spring, apply about a two inch layer to your garden and till or spade into the ground. Make sure that the soil isn't too wet when you do this. Gather up a handful of soil, make a ball and poke it with your finger. If it doesn't start to crumble apart, it's probably too wet. Never till or spade wet soil. If it falls apart, it's dry enough to work and add a little fertilizer too. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Managing Turf in the Shade

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Grass is a plant of the sunlight. Period. It's not a question of if it needs abundant sunlight, it's a question of do you have enough sunlight. Warm season grasses like Bermudagrass Zoysia and Buffalograss need full sunlight. They will grow up to about the drip line of a tree and then stop because there simply is not enough sunlight. The easiest way to know if you have enough sunlight to grow grass is to plant grass in the fall or early spring. If it slowly starts dying out as you go through the year, the answer is no, you don't have enough sunlight. If you wind up with very little grass, don't keep planting, just transition that area to a shade loving groundcover. If the grass is holding its own - not dying out but not thriving, you can take some management steps to keep from stressing it. Avoid excessive fertilizer, in fact fertilize it about half as often as you do the turf in full sun. Fertilizer just stresses the turf as it doesn't have enough sunlight to utilize the added nutrients. In the fall, as the leaves are falling, the lawn gets more sunlight so fertilize in October but not in the spring. Don't worry about crabgrass in the shade. Crabgrass is a warm season grass and needs full sun, it won't grow in the shade. Keep the lawn mowed tall. Restrict foot traffic in shaded areas so the soil doesn't get compacted. Be careful with irrigation in shady turf areas. The soil is cooler so the turf in that area uses less water. It is easy to over saturate the soils in the shade which can lead to other problems! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.