

### Don't Plant Ornamental Pears

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As we head into spring there's going to be a lot of people who want to plant spring flowering ornamental trees and a lot of people will invariably be attracted to the ornamental pears or specifically the Bradford Pear. Here's my advice about planting ornamental pear trees - DON'T. When Bradford Pears were first released in the mid 1960s they were all the rage. Street after street was lined with these very upright trees that were covered with white blooms in the spring. The problem was, while the pears first appeared to be sterile, it became apparent that they can actually be fertilized by every pear tree out there and as more ornamental pears were planted that were different cultivars, we've now created a monster. These trees become loaded with fruit every year, the birds eat the fruit and then deposit the seeds everywhere. Unfortunately, the seeds sprout and root readily and we are starting to have a real problem with these volunteering everywhere. They are very invasive. So when you see these trees this spring and think you want them, stop, give me a call and I will help you find a good flowering crabapple instead. Flowering crabapples do not have the same volunteer problem - we rarely see volunteer apple trees. We have a great bulletin at the Extension Office that talks about dozens of different crabapple trees and their characteristics. I can help you sort through the list for what you want, but please do not plant anymore ornamental pear trees. These things are a real blight!. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Straw Bale Gardening

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I love the internet. And thanks to all the bad information that people keep finding on the internet, I have job security for as long as I want to work! There are lots of gardening fads that show up on the internet and people go crazy for. All too often the attempts end in disaster simply because folks try these things and don't have enough information. Essentially they didn't read the fine print and didn't do everything that they needed to do. The other challenge is that something that may work in Boston, or Seattle or Atlanta, may not work the same way here. One fad that hit the internet a few years ago is straw bale gardening. The concept is that instead of planting plants in the ground, you put a straw bale on the ground and place your plants right into the bale. Will it work? Yes, but be advised that you need to condition your bale before you plant into it and it will take about three to four weeks to get your bale conditioned. Most of the things people want to grow in bales are warm season crops that you aren't going to plant until May so you've got time to get your bales conditioned. Conditioning is a process that involves watering the bale and sprinkling it with fertilizer. I'm not going to go through the detail, though. If you want to try it stop by the Extension Office for more information. Be advised that straw bale gardening will involve more watering and more fertilizing as the straw doesn't provide very many of the nutrients. Tomorrow, mason jar herbs. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Herbs in Mason Jars

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. One of the internet crazes that hit this year was growing herbs in mason jars. I became aware of this because someone sent me a photo of their herbs in mason jars and then photos from the website where they got the idea. The photos from the website showed these wonderfully full green and growing herb plants. This was contrasted to the wilted dead plants that the homeowner had tried to grow. Can you grow herbs in mason jars? Yes. But here's the challenge that we face with house plants and most everyone is going to have the same problems with growing herbs in mason jars. Overwatering. In houseplants we try to deal with it by having holes in the bottom of the pot to allow excess water to drain out. Even still, some people manage to drown their plants. I would prefer to use something OTHER than a mason jar so you can drain excess water away. If your container doesn't have drain holes, fill it about 1/3 full of smallish rocks and then put your potting soil, never ever garden dirt and plant in the jar. Then be very careful how much you water it. If there's water in the rocks, don't add more water. The other problem that you will run in to is insufficient light. You need a very bright windowsill to put these in. If you don't have one, get the plants under strong artificial light. Plants need light and even bright windows aren't bright enough. So if you ever run into something on the internet about growing plants and you want to try it, maybe ask me first, okay? This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Planting Peas

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Some years spring fever is rampant by the middle of February. We've had enough cold weather this year that winter has kept spring fever pretty well in check but I sense that we can likely expect a wave of spring fever sweeping through the area just any day now. Spring fever can get pretty ugly with a gardener. One of the ways to deal with this, if you worked your garden last fall anyway, is to get out there and plant a row or two of peas. Even more so than potatoes, peas are a very cold hardy crop. Shelling peas are most commonly used although snow peas are an option as well. Make a shallow row, about one half inch deep so they can get warmed by the sun easily and get growing. Plant the seeds about two inches apart in the row and it often works good to have 2 rows 6 to 8 inches apart. Or if you want, you can put a short fence between two rows for the peas to clamor on to as they grow. If you want to grow peas you really need to get them in the ground early to avoid hot weather. For shelling peas we have several cultivars: Little Marvel is a long time standard but there's also Green Arrow, Knight, Maestro, Burpeeana and Mr. Big. For snow peas there's Dwarf Grey, Sugar and Mammoth Melting Sugar or for Sugar Snap Peas - which are sort of a blend of the two, there's Sugar Bon, Sugar Ann, Super Sugar Snap and Sugar Sprint. So, if spring fever is getting you down, the best thing to do is follow John Lennon's advice and give peas a chance! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Pruning deciduous shrubs

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. March is a dangerous time of year. Spring fever can get cranked up and just like the honeybee on a warm day that has to do something, the gardener can go out and in the frenzied need to be doing SOMETHING, they do all the wrong things. An easy target for over zealous gardeners is the pruning of deciduous shrubs. We basically have three kinds of deciduous shrubs. We have those that bloom first thing in the spring on new wood that grew last year. This would include spirea, forsythia and lilics. We have shrubs that will flower later in the season on new wood they grow this year. This would be things like rose of sharon, pyracanta and roses. Then we have deciduous shrubs that we grow mainly for their foliage, not their flowers. This would include boxwood, privet and Euonymous. Anything that flowers first thing in the spring you do NOT prune now. If you do, you are pruning out the flower buds. Prune those right after they bloom. Those that bloom later in the year or we don't care about the flowers can be pruned now. If you don't know what a shrub in your yard is, don't prune it now. Wait until it blooms or leafs out and then we can figure it out together. Sometimes we just shear back a shrub to keep it's form. But other times we really need to renovate a shrub and thin it out. If that's the case, it becomes a much more complex pruning job that involves identifying and removing old growth or dead wood. For more information on this, give me a call! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.