

Gardening with Chuck for October 29 - November 4, 2018

Winterizer Lawn Fertilizer

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've been receiving phone calls lately about whether lawns should be fertilized again, speaking of cool season lawns like fescue and bluegrass here. If you have a Bermudagrass, Zoysia or Buffalograss lawn, this does not apply to you. If you haven't fertilized your lawn at all yet this fall, the answer is YES, fertilize your lawn. If you haven't yet applied a weed and feed type product, there is still time. As long as we are having daily highs above 50, we can still treat for broadleaf weeds, these are the ones that bloom so pretty in the spring like dandelions, chickweed and henbit. And the long range forecast, at least right now has a lot of daily highs over 50. If you have fertilized your lawn once already this fall, then a second fertilization is not out of line at all. The most important fertilization you can make to your cool season lawn is in the fall. The second most important fertilization you can make on your cool season lawn, is the second one in the fall. If you have already treated for weeds and don't see any more seedling coming along, then go with a straight high nitrogen lawn fertilizer like a 27-3-3. The old thinking of using a high phosphorus low nitrogen fertilizer as a winterizer has been pretty well debunked. Unless you know you have a low phosphorus situation, go with the high nitrogen general lawn fertilizer. If you haven't treated for weeds yet or find a lot of new weeds coming because you treated too early, learn, then use a weed and feed for this fertilization. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Normal Needle Drop on Pines

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Pine trees have leaves, only we call them needles. Even though they are evergreens, they don't keep those needles forever. Evergreen trees grow from the branch tips out. As they do so older needles become shaded and before long the energy the tree expends keeping those needles alive is more than the tree gets back from the photosynthesis from those needles. So the tree sheds them, getting rid of dead weight if you will. In general we feel that pine trees will keep needles a maximum of 3 or 4 years. Sometimes the needles fall off slowly over the year, but more often, sometime in the fall, the pine trees will do an "all at once" needle drop. Pay attention because this is important. When this natural needle drop occurs the needles will often turn a bright yellow, very quickly, and then start falling. All of these needles will be back on the branches, not out on the tips. As the needles fall you can rake them up and use them for mulch. In southern pine plantings these needles will be raked up and baled as pine hay or pine straw. Common in the south, next to impossible to find here, but a very good mulch! Bright yellow needles are eye catching, but nothing to worry about. When you want to worry though, is when all the needles on a pine branch, clear out to the end, turn brown and don't fall off the tree. This is a problem. If it's on scattered branches it often means disease that we may be able to treat for. If it's the entire tree, especially late in the summer, it's pine wilt. The end. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Do I Have to Rake the Leaves?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Did you notice what happened late last week when we had that day long rain? Leaves came pouring off the trees. While many leaves are yet to fall I'm sure that there's more than one homeowner out there looking at their yard and with their best little inner child voice are whining, "do I have to rake the leaves?" The answer is a very definite, maybe. The worst case scenario is to get a lot of leaves, and little leaves are worse than big leaves, and then have snow or rain sort of mat them down. You can smother turfgrasses when that happens. If the leaves aren't wet and matted, the lawn can actually tolerate several inches of leaves. In fact some leaf cover is a good thing as they can break down and return a lot of nutrients to the soil. Often the best thing to do is to every few days, mow the lawn with a mulching lawn mower. This will shred the leaves and cause them to start to break down faster. If you don't like that look, then go ahead and mow and bag them or rake them up, and put them in a compost pile or direct add it to a garden and rototill them in. They are excellent organic matter. There is one exception to this in that you never want to add leaves from a walnut tree to a vegetable garden. The walnut leaves contain a compound that is toxic to tomatoes and tomato relatives. It is best to work on leaf shredding or leaf collection as an ongoing basis through the season. If you wait until the end of leaf fall you may suddenly find yourself with a mess of leaves under heavy snow! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Still Time to Plant Bulbs

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 best things about early November is that you can often find some really good deals on spring flowering bulbs. Stores are closing them out, probably so they can make room for Christmas items, and they can be heavily discounted. The flip side of that coin is that it still isn't too late to get them planted. I once planted some bulbs between Christmas and New Years and they did just fine, in fact they still come up and bloom every spring. They'll be a little later blooming the first spring but no problem after that. When you find some of these bulbs on sale check them over very closely though. Select large bulbs that are still firm. If bulbs seem lightweight, squeeze them a little bit. If there's a lot of give, or simply hollow space under the husk it means that the bulb has dehydrated and shouldn't be bought. Avoid bulbs that have excessive top growth also. A little nubbin' of green is okay but leaves a couple inches long; not acceptable. Remember that there's a correlation between size and condition of the bulb at planting time and the quality of the bloom the next spring. Use all the same planting wisdom for late planting of bulbs as you do for normal time frame planting. Plant them at the right depth and in nice size groupings for an attractive display. If you amend the soil, amend it UNDER the base of the planting hole as well as the soil you put back in on top. Use a high nitrogen fertilizer like 27-3-3 after planting at the rate of 3 cups per 100 square feet. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Storing Garden Tools

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I was planting my garlic last week, mere hours before that rain arrived. I'm glad I got that done! The hoe I was using to make my rows to plant was the hoe that my mother used and she got it from her father when asthma no longer allowed him to garden. It's a good hoe and I'm sure that the blade may be approaching a century old. It has had the same handle for as long as I can remember. My Grandpa Sandall was a stickler for properly taking care of his tools. He passed that on to my Mom and it was expected of me as a very young gardener. I used her hoe one time and put it back in the shed without properly cleaning it. Let's just say I never made that mistake again! I'm probably through with the hoe until next spring so before long I'll clean it up, touch up the blade, sand a few rough spots off the handle and since I haven't for several years, I'll probably put a coat of polyurethane on the handle. Tools, good tools, should be used and appreciated and cared for. As you are putting tools away for the winter, clean all dirt or other debris off of them. Use various sizes of steel brushes to accomplish this, maybe even coarse steel wool to remove any rust spots on metal. Use a file, or a grinder if necessary, to sharpen up the blade. Put a light coat of oil, not WD-40, it's a non residual oil and won't help, on metal surfaces and lube the joints of pruning shears. Smooth the handle and apply polyurethane to protect it. Quality tools should last a lifetime or two or three. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.