

Get Ready To Plant Garlic!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is an exciting time of year in the Otte Household - my seed garlic arrived in the mail recently. That means that garlic planting time is right around the corner. Garlic needs to be planted in the fall just as the soil is starting to cool down. I've found that garlic does best in our area with planting around October 20th, give or take. You can plant a little earlier or you can plant a little later but I find that this seems to work pretty well. You don't want to plant in mud so with recent rains we may have to push the planting date back a bit, but that's okay. All we are trying to do is get the garlic clove in the ground and started getting roots developed. Garlic has pretty good cold hardiness so it can be planted fairly late - it may just slow development next spring. There are several ways to plant garlic. Big commercial growers will have beds about 4 feet wide and plant it in rows 8 inches apart with a five inch spacing within the row. I tend to plant in rows one foot apart with about the same 5 to 6 inch spacing within the row. You plant the cloves one to two inches deep with the pointy end up. You want to use large cloves of a known variety. Much of the culinary garlic in grocery stores will come from Mexico so it may not be a good variety to grow here. Separate the bulbs to individual cloves just before planting. There's a direct relationship between size of clove and size of resulting bulb. Small cloves are best kept back for cooking. Cover the bulbs and fertilize yet this fall. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Get Grass Planting Wrapped Up

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With recent bouts of cooler weather, cloudy weather and rain, the soil temperatures are cooling off as well. This is a good indicator that you should be wrapping up your grass seed planting soon and here's why. Grass seed needs moisture, warmth and time to germinate. As the temperature falls the germination process takes longer. With fall planting we want to get grass plants well enough established with a good root system to hold them in place so any freezing and thawing during the winter doesn't frost heave them out of the ground. As the soil cools there is less time for the grass plants to get established. Tall fescue germinates faster than bluegrass and can do so at lower temperatures. But we generally feel that tall fescue can be planted up to about October 15th where bluegrass we recommend stopping planting around October 1st. And like I said, daylight hours are now less than night time hours. Couple that with some cold rains and you've got a rapidly dropping soil temperature. As of the end of last week 2 inch soil temperatures were down into the low 60s! However, as long as the ground isn't frozen, we can go out after about November 1st and do dormant seeding. Normally by then the soil is cool enough that seed planted won't come up until the soil warms in the spring. Dormant seeding only works where you are actually placing the seed in the ground. Snow seeding is something else completely that we will talk about, maybe, during this coming winter!

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Wrapping Up the Tomato Season

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Why is it that the tomato plants are either just about dead by this time of year, or they start loading up with so many tomatoes they are about to break over. There never seems to be any in between! As the weather gets colder tomato growth slows and that includes their ripening. If you are about to get to frosty weather, as in a freeze is forecast for the next evening, you do have the option of doing an early pick and getting them inside. Tomatoes will ripen off the vine if they have reached the mature green stage. Those are the ones that are basically full sized and if you look on the bottom, the blossom end, they have a white star shaped zone. This is an indication that the fruit is starting to ripen and it has all of the flavor compounds that it needs. Obviously any tomato starting to develop any pink or orange mature color is past this stage and safe to harvest as well. When you do a "just ahead of the freeze" harvest, separate your tomatoes into three groups: those that are mostly red, those that are just starting to turn and those that are still green. Any tomatoes with defects such as breaks in the skin or evidence of beginning to rot should be discarded. Wrap each tomato individually in newspaper and in cardboard trays or cartons and use more newspapers if you stack them more than one deep. The newspapers keep juice from rotting tomatoes from infecting still sound tomatoes. Keep them close to 55 degrees and use as they become fully ripe, or as fried green tomatoes! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Forcing 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 biggest challenges in gardening is to determine a time line so you can get things done on time. Something that people will think about, oh sometime in January, is forcing some bulbs to have some mid winter blooms in their house. That's where you need to plan ahead and get a time line developed. The problem is that if you are forcing bulbs you need to really start several months in advance, depending on what species you want to force. Most bulb species will need 10 to 16 weeks of cold treatment before you can bring them in to room temperature and start growing them. Then you'll need another 4 to 6 weeks of growth to have them blooming at the time that you want them in bloom. Which means, that with the exception of paper white narcissus, if you're looking at getting pots blooming about early February you need to start now. Which for many people will work just fine. What you need to do right now though is get out and get your bulbs purchased, make sure you have plenty of potting soil and then either buy some new pots or get some extras cleaned up and sanitized so you can start planting soon. The details of getting the bulbs potted and starting through the process is too complicated to even start in a two minute radio program. We have an excellent bulletin with great details on how to do this so you can look it up on line. You can search for forcing bulbs, K-state research and extension, or drop by the office and I'll print you out a copy!

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Fall Planting of Asparagus or Rhubarb

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Two of the first fresh vegetables of spring are asparagus and rhubarb. Traditionally these are planted in the early spring, basically mid March to mid April, both with very specific planting requirements to have a successful stand established. We do have very good bulletins on both of these crops and if you grow them or are thinking about growing them I'd encourage you to pick these up or find them on the web.

Asparagus is planted fairly deep in a trench and rhubarb needs a well drained soil that is rich with organic matter. Both normally need one or two growing seasons after planting before we can start harvesting. However, once they are well established the plantings can produce for decades with only nominal care. Occasionally though we have a need to transplant rhubarb or asparagus and people ask if they can move it in the fall. The answer is yes, but this is only for transplanting established plants, not starting new. Basically you can't find new crowns of either right now. If you have to move asparagus or rhubarb now first wait for frost to brown down the tops, if they are still growing. Cut off the old browned top growth and carefully dig up the crowns. Move them to the new location being sure to plant them as deep as they were when you dug them up. Then water them down well to get the soil settled down around the roots. Rhubarb is planted somewhat shallowly to it helps to mulch it to prevent frost heaving. You don't need to mulch asparagus. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.