

Gardening with Chuck for September 10 - 16, 2018

Little Barley

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With the rain that we've been having one of our growing spring lawn weed pests will be germinating soon so controls need to be applied NOW, even though you probably aren't thinking about it. Little barley is a grass that no one notices until it has mature seed in late spring and those pointy little seeds are in your socks or your pet's paws. By that time of year the plant is already dying. Treatment is superfluous. No, to deal with that particular issue we need to start NOW, just before the seeds start germinating and the plant gets established. Little Barley is a cool season winter annual. It grows like wheat sprouting in the fall, overwintering as a small plant and then growing rapidly in the spring and developing a seed head. If you are overseeding this fall there isn't much you can do as the products that will stop little barley will also stop your grass seed from germinating. While most of the crabgrass preventers will stop little barley from growing, only a few of them are technically labeled for little barley. Surflan, sold as Weed Impede by Monterey Lawn and Garden is one that has Little Barley on the label. Dimension, active ingredient dithiopyr, does have "barley" on the label and specifically *Hordeum* spp. Little barley is a *Hordeum* species *Hordeum pusillum* to be precise so in essence Dimension is also labeled for little barley. Again, remember though is that if you are over-seeding or re-seeding this fall, you can't use these products as they'll inhibit your grass seed from sprouting. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Harvesting Apples

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Not all apples are created equally and no two years are ever the same. Tables of when varieties of apples are ripe are only suggestions and guides not hard and fast rules. The only way to tell if apples are truly ripe is to periodically sample one. You can look at the under color, that color in the blossom end of the apple and it will change from an immature green color to a light green or cream color. Amount of redness doesn't always count. Many cultivars will start to release from the tree more easily as they approach maturity. You should be able to grab the apple, place your thumb against the stem and pop it loose. If you are breaking off branch tips with leaves you are doing it wrong and need to stop as you are damaging the portion of the branch where it blooms and bears fruit. Fruit will continue to ripen after harvest but the longer you can leave it on the tree generally the sweeter and better flavor you will have. After picking, wash the fruit gently and sort into those with flaws or insect damage that you will want to use first and those in better shape for storage for later. Storing in plastic bags with small holes will help them last longer. Check them every 2 to 4 weeks for condition, and use before they go out of condition. Varieties do vary in storage life. Fuji, Arkansas Black and Granny Smith can store for up to 8 months under refrigeration. Varieties like Gala, Jonathan and Delicious are more like 3 to 4 months under ideal storage conditions. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Soil pH Not Right? Start Amending Now!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. All plants have a preferred soil pH level that they grow best at. Soil that is neutral has a pH of 7. As soils become more acid the number becomes lower and as soils become more alkaline, the pH number goes above 7. The more rainfall a region receives (and this is over hundreds of years) the more weathered the soil becomes and the more acid it is. Soils in the eastern US are often down in the range of pH 5.0. The less rainfall a region experiences the higher the soil pH is. These are generalizations and there's always exceptions. Many of our garden plants actually grow best with a soil pH that is slightly acid, perhaps in the 6.3 to 6.7 pH. Potatoes like it even more acid than that, blueberries like the soil real acid. Plants will grow in higher pH soils, but they may not thrive. Because our soils are not as highly weathered they are often above pH 7 - in the slightly alkaline range. In fact, especially up on the hill tops, soil pH of 7.5 to 8 is not unheard of. When soils are acid, we add lime, calcium carbonate. It reacts with the soil acidity neutralizing it and raising the pH. Liming works fairly quickly. If soils are alkaline we add sulfur. It takes longer to lower soil pH - and adding organic matter can help. The challenge is that you can not tell by looking at a soil what the pH is. The little kits you buy in garden stores aren't much help either. You need a good qualitative soil analysis done. Once we have that information then I can prescribe an amendment to help, if it's needed. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Lawn Weeds

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 walking across my lawn the middle of last week and happened to look down. In with the grass plants, that finally are starting to grow again, I saw nice little broadleaf weeds. Some of these were the summer annual weeds like spurge that had started growing since mid August when we started to get some regular rains. Spurge and some of those other summer annuals will die with the first freeze. They'll go ahead and produce seed so feel free to treat them if you want to. What I also noticed was very young winter annual weeds. Winter annuals are those annoying weeds that bloom first thing in the spring. Things like chickweed, speedwell, henbit and dandelions. Actually dandelions are a perennial but we manage them like winter annuals. All through the area of the yard I was walking I saw lots of henbit. Most of this henbit was likely less than a week old. It was small and there was a lot of it coming up. Do not, I repeat DO NOT, rush out and spray these weeds yet. The reason being is that the winter annual weed germination season is JUST starting. Those rascals, especially with this rain, will be germinating for the next 4 to 5 weeks. If you spray now, you'll have new seedlings come up tomorrow or a week or a month from now that will be unaffected. Wait until mid to late October to spray these. By then the soil is cooling down enough that germination should be over. Most years you can even spray into early November. But the middle of September is just too early! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Be careful with wet soils

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We have had more rain since August 1st than we did the 7 months previous to that. It's just been that kind of crazy year! We went from ground being brick hard and too dry to do anything with to ground being soggy sopping wet. Of course, this happens just about the time that many of us want to start doing work in our yards and gardens. So here's the first warning - just back off and relax. There's nothing that is so darn time sensitive that you can't wait for things to dry down. It'll happen faster than you think. It's too wet if you stick a shovel down into the soil, pull it up and where the shovel went in the soil smears. If you think maybe it'll till up but you just sense it's a little damp yet, back off! When you get out on ground that is too wet you will compact it. Compaction presses the soil particles together which eliminates air spaces between the particles. Air spaces are also water spaces. They are spaces that roots grow into. Instead of having mellow soil you have a block of dirt that more resembles a big chunk of concrete. The problem is that once soil is compacted, it's very difficult to get it uncompacted. I know you want to get out there and get mowing, some of you already have. But be careful with your large riding lawn mowers. You can compact wet soils quickly and sharp turning with the zero turn mowers can dig up divets out of a yard in a big hurry. We've still got several weeks of prime time for yard work left. Don't feel like you have to get it all done tomorrow. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.