

## Windmill Grass

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 a great number of plants in our state.

Which ones flourish in any given year depends on the weather. How hot or cold how wet or dry any given growing season is has a huge impact on the plants that thrive that year. Even when during the year it is wet or dry hot or cold can make a big difference. One that I've noticed this year being very abundant, especially in my yard, but elsewhere, is windmill grass! Windmill grass is heading out like crazy now and is very noticeable. The seed head is a tan to tannish red color. It isn't overly tall and the seed head can have 2 or 3 layers of spikes radiating out in all directions. In some ways, when you look at the seed head from the top down it sort of looks like a windmill rotor. This is a warm season native perennial bunch grass. Being perennial, crabgrass preventers won't touch it. Being a grass, the broad leaf weed killers won't touch it. Roundup will control it, but it will pretty much control everything. It is very well suited to the dry weather and came on strong this year especially in hot and dry spots in yards, like along my south lawn next to the street. There is one herbicide labeled for selective windmill grass control. The chemical name is mesotrione and about the only product I have found with it is called Tenacity. You probably won't find it in a store but will have to get it online. Best time to treat is likely late June and early July, but mark the areas in the lawn where you have windmill grass so you can treat it next year. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Moths and Millers

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I am amazed at the number of people that are uncomfortable with the small flying rather drab moths that we see around homes this time of year. Some people call them millers, and that name came from Britain or Europe for a very specific small plainly colored moth. Now it's used for any annoying small moth in the late summer or fall. These can be several different species. Some of these are actually the adults of various cutworms. Some of these moths were here as caterpillars, flew out to the mountains of Colorado for the summer and have now returned to start the life cycle over again. In fact the moth of the Army Cutworm can be a very important food source for bears in the Rocky Mountains. One that we are seeing quite a bit of right now is a small black or gray very triangular moth with a bit of a snout. This is the moth of the green cloverworm. We can expect to continue to see more of these in coming years. The green cloverworm feeds on soybeans, and other legumes, and as we grow more and more soybeans, more food will likely mean more moths! Once we hit frosty weather, the populations of these things will start to drop like a rock! It's their life cycle. They are often attracted to lights and warm sides of houses (think rocks). If you don't have to leave porch or yard lights on, don't. Spraying insecticides isn't really necessary because it won't really do much good. Swat or vacuum the few that get in the house. And the rest will be gone soon. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Crickets!!!!!!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If you haven't heard yet, and I mean literally heard, it's cricket season! The late summer rains appear to have really triggered a population explosion of the rascals. In more than one home around town, I can guarantee that it is all out war with the annoying chirpers. First of all, only the males chirp and it's fairly easy to tell them apart. If you see a cricket with long needle or spear like appendage at the back of it's body, then this is a female. This is the ovipositor or what she uses to lay her eggs in the soil before coming inside. While annoying, she's not the one making all the racket. The males don't have this ovipositor but they are the ones that make all that blasted noise...at all hours of the night... that you can never track down! Crickets are masters of getting into homes in the fall. Ironically, they can only live for a few months at the most inside homes before they die of cricket old age. To reduce the number of crickets that get in your house, keep the house sealed up. Make sure doors fit tight and cracks in the foundation are caulked up. If you have screen doors make sure you don't have holes in the screens. Apply an insecticide band around the house out 6 to 12 feet with a general purpose lawn or garden insecticide. Inside the house you can use a general purpose pre-mixed household pest control product. Spray doorsills and either side of the door. Spray along baseboards as that is where crickets normally travel. It may not kill them immediately, but it'll get 'em! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## How Late Can I Plant Grass?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Once we move past mid September we start to move into that last gasp chance to plant grass seed. September is obviously THE best time to plant grass seed and I mean cool season turf grasses like tall fescue and bluegrass. Bluegrass seeding pretty well needs to be shut down once we hit October 1<sup>st</sup>. It just doesn't seem to germinate as well as the temperature drops and it is slower to germinate, grow and get established than many of the other grasses. Tall fescue we can sneak into mid October before shutting that down for a few weeks. Remember, what we are afraid of is not that the seedlings will freeze out and die. We are concerned that the small grass plants won't get a good root system developed and through freezing and thawing they will be frost heaved up enough out of the ground that the crowns will dry out and that is when they die. I know many of you have heard that you can sow cool season grasses any month that has the letter R in the name. And there is a little bit of truth in that. If we know that we are going to have warm weather on into November we can push grass seeding back later in October. But it's a risk and you may pay the price. You can also do dormant season anytime after about mid November. In dormant season you are putting the grass seed into cool soil knowing that it won't really germinate until it starts to warm up next spring. It can work, especially in overseeding situations, but you have to be patient! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Harvesting Sweet Potatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Sweet potatoes are in no way related to Irish potatoes, which are actually from the mountainous Andes regions of South America. Irish potatoes are cool weather crops. We plant them early in the spring or mid summer for a late harvest. They aren't scared of a little frost. Sweet potatoes, on the other hand, are a tropical vine. Cool weather hurts the vines, cool weather hurts the roots. With Irish potatoes you are harvesting a tuber. Sweet potatoes are a swollen root. There is a difference. Sweet potatoes are best harvested just before the first fall freeze. If you let the vines freeze hard and the soil cool off very much, you can hurt the tubers so they lose quality and don't store nearly as long. If you have a few hills of sweet potatoes you can wait until the last minute because sweet potatoes don't lose quality as they grow bigger. Size doesn't influence quality. If you have a lot of sweet potatoes, you may want to start harvesting now! Sweet potatoes should be cured after harvest. This helps to heal small wounds in the tender skin. Place the roots in a warm humid location for 5 to 10 days. 85 to 90 degrees is ideal. You can use a space heater to help warm things up and also place moist towels around the curing room to raise the humidity. This curing not only heals wounds but it also helps to convert starches to sugars for improved flavor and texture. Once they are cured you want to store the sweet potatoes no cooler than 55 degrees. Room temperature works just fine! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.