

Mushrooms and Fairy Rings

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Sure as it's August, and we've had several inches of rain since the first of the month, mushrooms and fairy rings are starting to appear. Fairy rings are nothing more than a large underground fungal organism that keeps growing out and sending up mushrooms. Whether it's a fairy ring or just a mushroom here or there, mushrooms are the fruiting body of an underground fungus that is living off of decaying tree and grass roots. If you've ever knocked down a dead tree and noticed weird cobbwebby type strands, this is the actual fungus organism. Unfortunately, since the fungus may be living several feet underground, there is no way to stop the mushrooms from developing. In time the fungus runs out of food and dies. Until then, don't spray anything on them, just kick over the mushrooms when they appear. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Kansas Doesn't Like Pines

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Kansas is the only state that has no native pines. Of all 50 states, Kansas is the only one that doesn't have even one species of native evergreen other than the red cedar. What this should tell you is that we shouldn't be planting pines in Kansas. If you have a pine tree that is turning a gray green to brown color right now, generally the entire tree, that is pine wilt. The tree is dead and there's nothing you can do to stop it. If only part of the tree turns brown, without going through that gray green phase then you are likely seeing weather or environmental damage. There are a couple of diseases of pine needles that we can spray for, but not now, that's in the spring. If it gets dry again, water pine trees once a month with a slow running open hose. And think twice before planting any more pine trees! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Mimosa Webworms

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Mimosa webworms are one of those webby tent making caterpillars. The problem is that while they feed on mimosa trees, they also feed on honeylocusts. If you have a honeylocust tree and notice that the ends of the branches are all covered with a bunch of webbing, this is likely from mimosa webworms. They start at the top of trees and work their way down the sides. Heavy infestations will leave the tree looking scorched, almost like the tree is dying. Closer inspection will reveal the extensive webbing. By the time most homeowners notice it's too late to have good control. If you have a small tree it may be worth trying to treat. Bigger trees can be costly to treat and control this late is shaky at best. Plan to treat next year in mid to late July. Orthene, spinosad and the pyrethroid products all work well. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Harvesting Pears

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. You can not treat all fruit species the same when it comes to harvesting. Pears especially are different than others. Most of us have Bartlett pears or pears similar to Bartletts. If you leave these on the tree until ripe, they'll have these grit cells that you can feel in your teeth. You have to harvest them a little bit early and let them ripen inside. Commercial orchards use a Magness meter to test fruit firmness. Harvest when fruit removes fairly easily from the tree with a lift and a twist.

Background color of the fruit should be changing from dark green to light green or yellowish green. Then look at the skin for the lenticels which are breathing pores for the fruit. These start out white to greenish white and turn brown as the fruit nears maturity. If these three considerations are met, I harvest! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Harvesting Apples

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Unlike pears, you want to leave apples on a tree until ripe to fully develop full flavor and sweetness. Red color of the apples is not reliable as I have some Red Delicious that are still several weeks from being ripe but they already have a lot of red on them. When it comes to determining apple maturity I first start by looking at the calyx or blossom end of the apple. Look down in that basin. If it is still fairly green it isn't ready, unless it's a Granny Smith. In most apples it should turn a yellowish green as it matures. Secondly, simply sacrifice one, cut it open and taste it. Take a real thin slice and hold it up to the light. If there's a green tinge it isn't ripe. Lastly most apple seeds change from a light green to brown as the fruit ripens. If all these things come together then you can harvest the apples and enjoy them! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.