

Winterizing Strawberries

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Strawberries, while being one of our most reliable fruit plants, can be somewhat finicky about winter survival. In fact we may have more winterkill than usual this year because of the cold weather we had about a month ago. But to keep it from getting worse and to prevent the possible dreaded frost heaving, you should get your strawberry bed mulched soon. You can use weed free straw or hay mulch to help protect the bed. Make sure that the mulch is shaken to break up the compressed chunks that happen from the baling process. Three inches is an ideal depth. Sometimes you can carefully work the mulch in around the plants, some people will use twine or fencing to help hold the mulch in place. Be slow to remove the mulch in the spring and then remove it gradually to help protect against late frosts! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Storing Power Equipment

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. While some of us are still running lawn mowers to mulch up leaves, many of you have put away your mowers and blowers and other small engine equipment for the winter. It's a good idea to clean up equipment as you put it away so it's ready to go next spring. Change the oil. Clean or change the air filter. Put in a new spark plug and then a shot of lightweight oil in the cylinder. Either drain the gas out or use a gas stabilizer. Sharpen mower blades now and if there are grease zerks, grease the equipment. Go over the equipment with a fine tooth comb to make sure there aren't any loose nuts or screws and nothing needs repairs. If you do need a tune up or repairs, get the equipment in now during a more slack time instead of crunch time next spring. A little prevention goes a long ways! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Houseplant losing leaves?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. People look at houseplants and they see green and leaves. And that's it. Plants are very complex and most plants, when they grow new leaves, do so in accordance to the conditions that they are experiencing. Leaves grown in high light conditions are different than leaves grown in low light conditions. High light leaves have less chlorophyll and it is located deeper in the leaf.

Chlorophyll is where photosynthesis takes place and occurs in very strong connection with light intensity. More sunlight, more photosynthetic activity. Low light leaves need more chlorophyll closer to the leaf surface to provide food. This explanation is to point out that when plants are moved from outside to indoors, or even to a new room, they may drop leaves to produce new leaves adjusted to the new location. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Overwintering Potted Plants

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Many people garden in containers or simply grow flowers for the outside of their house in pots. This is all well and good. But when we try to grow plants that would normally be quite winter hardy in pots, we often find that they don't survive the winter. The reason for the winter kill is pretty simple - plants in the ground have a great deal of buffering from the soil and soil moisture around them. It can be 10 below zero above ground but a few inches below ground it's only going to be 28 or 29 degrees. The cold is coming in from one direction and warmer soil below helps buffer those extremes. Under those same conditions a plant in a pot is going to have cold coming in from ALL directions. The center of that pot may be close to the temperature of the air. Moving those inside an unheated building can help. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fresh Greenery Decorations

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Many people understandably like to use all sorts of plants, natural greenery and assorted other items as decorations in and around their house at Christmas time. Potted plants like poinsettias don't bother me but just about everything else, including that Christmas tree can become a major fire hazard. Leaving this greenery in a cool location until just before Christmas or your party can help. It will really start to dry out once you bring it inside. Keep it away from heat sources and certainly don't use open flames in conjunction with this greenery. Use those neat LED bulb candles. Once Christmas is over, or your party, get that stuff out of the house. Or if you want it in the house longer, get a double set. Pines, spruces and firs are the highest fire hazard. Holly is less worrisome but will get dry! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.