

Gardening with Chuck Programs for February 25 - March 3, 2019

Planning the Fruit Garden

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I see a lot of fruit trees get purchased and planted every spring. And many homeowners absolutely shoot their fruit production in the foot by poor planning of where they're going to plant those trees. People hear about blossoms getting frosted so they plant their fruit trees on the south side of the house in a sunny spot. That sunny spot warms up faster than anywhere else in the yard, the tree breaks dormancy way too early and then the blossoms get frosted. Fruit trees should be planted away from the house or on the north side of the house. Pick a spot that get's summer sunshine, but is slow for the snow to melt. You want to get that fruit tree chilled and keep it dormant just as long as possible so it doesn't bloom too early. It isn't the absolute cold that causes damage, it's the early blooms that get frosted. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Water Sprouts on Fruit Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Anybody that has spent much time pruning fruit trees knows about suckers or water sprouts. Those are the shoots that develop on fruit trees and grow straight up several feet in just one summer. And every March we cut them back off and from May through August they grow right back. Let's try something different this year. Research from several apple growing regions seem to indicate that if you wait to prune those water sprouts until mid summer, like July, the auxins aren't released that trigger that massive regrowth as we see from late winter pruning. So in March, do your normal apple and pear tree pruning but don't cut off any of those watersprouts. Go back in in late June or July and carefully prune out those watersprouts then. Sure, they'll probably sap out more, but it won't hurt the tree. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Cold Weather and Insect Pests

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I can't begin to tell you how many times I've heard people hope for a hard winter to kill off the insect pests.

Unfortunately there are two basic problems with that. First of all, winters are milder than they used to be, and secondly, insects that normally overwinter have excellent antifreeze. Do you remember all that talk a few weeks ago about the polar vortex killing Emerald Ash borers? More wishful thinking. Emerald Ash borers, in the winter, have to get down to -20 degrees to even begin to impact them. The 95% plus kill of overwintering Emerald Ash Borers that some of those reports were talking about would require -33 degrees for several hours. While we could wish for that, we didn't have temperatures in Kansas that got anywhere close to cold enough to damage much of anything! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fertilizing Spring Flowering Bulbs

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. A few spring flowering bulbs are starting to poke their brave little heads above ground. Silly flowers. For decades gardeners always fertilized those spring flowering bulbs about the time that they finished blooming. We thought that since the leaves were pulling nutrients down into the bulb the roots were pulling up nutrients as well. But what years of research eventually showed us was that once the blooming season was over, the roots pretty well quit even though the leaves were still moving carbohydrates into the bulb. We need to put fertilizer down just as soon as spring growth gets started. That is when the roots are pulling nutrients in from the soil. So as soon as you see those green leaves showing up, use one rounded teaspoon of a 12-12-12 type balanced fertilizer per square foot of bulb bed. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

March Lawn Tasks

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. March! It's finally March! I'm never sure which month is the cruelest, February or March. But spring starts this month and sometime we will start to have green grass. And sometime this month you will have the overwhelming urge to do something in your yard, maybe. Assuming you did your fall lawn fertilization and weed control there really isn't much that you need to do to your fescue or bluegrass yard in March. As weather warms up and the grass starts growing, look around for broadleaf weeds that escaped control. These can be spot treated with a liquid weed control product. Just make sure that you mix according to label directions and that the temperature is 50 degrees or above at the time of the treatment and for a few hours afterwards. If it rains or snows within 24 hours, it will reduce control. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.