

Mosquito Control

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Recently the KS Dept of Health and Environment issued a notice that the entire state was under a moderate risk of West Nile Virus. This was no surprise given all the rain we've had this year. Mosquito trapping is going on around the state and numbers and types of mosquitoes are on the rise. And yes, we have more than one kind of mosquito. What's of moderate concern is that we are seeing a lot of the mosquitoes that can carry West Nile Virus early in the season. As you're out for whatever reason remember the 3 D's. First of all drain standing water so mosquitoes can't breed. Secondly dress appropriately. Long sleeves and long pants in light colors will result in fewer bites. Lastly use DEET, or other repellents. Many people never react to the West Nile Virus. But for a very few, it can be fatal. Take precautions! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Blossom End Rot

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. One of the things that we often run into with the first tomatoes of the season is a condition where the blossom end - the end opposite the stem, starts to rot and sink in just as the fruit starts to ripen, sometimes even before. You've babied this plant and are so looking forward to your first tomato and now this. The condition is not a disease but a temporary calcium imbalance within the plant. Soil moisture fluctuation can make this worse, use mulch, as can heavy fertilization with ammonium based nitrogen fertilizers. As the roots catch up to the tops the problem will eventually straighten itself out. If you have severe problems with this annually you may want to switch your nitrogen fertilization over and just use calcium nitrate to fertilize as it isn't an ammonia form of nitrogen. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Why No Squash?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We are finally getting enough heat units built up that the early plantings of vine crops like summer squash or cucumbers are or will be blooming soon. Not too long after that I will start to get phone calls from gardeners who are concerned because their vines are blooming like crazy but no fruit, meaning squash or cucumbers, are setting on. Vine crops have separate male and female flowers. They are easy to differentiate. Female flowers have a miniature version of the fruit between the stem and the flower. Male flowers are on a long filament. Male flowers start blooming much earlier and in greater number than female flowers. If you aren't getting fruit, start checking to see if they are male or female flowers. If they're all male flowers, just be patient. The female flowers will start blooming soon enough. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Tomato Leaf Curl

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. About the first hot day we have, and I mean really hot with low humidity, I can guarantee that anyone with tomato plants, if they are out looking at them, will find the tomato leaves rolling up. Which often leads to a fair amount of panic. There are several things that can cause tomato leaves to roll. One that I see a lot is from herbicide drift. But herbicide drift usually causes tomato leaves to curl under and get thick, leathery and distorted. What I most often see is actually physiological leaf curl. The leaf curls up along the midrib and often uncurls overnight when it's cooler. This is simply a way for the tomato plant to regulate temperature and moisture loss early in the season when it is still developing a root system. It can even happen with moist soils so just don't worry about it and be patient! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Squash Bugs

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The first generation of squash bugs are getting active. So basically you need to be spraying even if you don't see any. If you don't, the first generation will mature and then start laying eggs for the second generation and there'll be a whole heck of a lot more and you will never catch up!

Squash bugs suck sap out of the plant and fruit. They don't eat the insecticide. You HAVE to get the insecticide on their body. Adult squash bugs have a hard body covering that's hard to penetrate with insecticides. Immatures do not so they are easier to kill. You need to spray early in the morning and spray up under the leaves - dusts on top of the leaves won't work - sorry! Use insecticides that contain permethrin as a first choice; malathion or methoxychlor as a second choice. Spray every 5 to 7 days. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.