

Gardening with Chuck Programs for March 18 - 24, 2019

Seedling Conservation Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. When you decide to plant trees in a windbreak, or plant a lot of trees for wildlife, conservation or a woodlot, it can become price prohibitive to go to a local nursery and plop down 25 to 200 bucks per tree. Trees at a nursery are large trees designed to give instant impact on a home landscape. But for a windbreak or some of those other uses, you can have a little more patience and start smaller. The Kansas Forest Service has seedling trees available, 25 seedlings for \$25. These are only going to be 10 to 24 inches tall, depending on species, and they are bare root. You can have them shipped to your home from Manhattan or go over and pick them up. Normally they would be busy shipping right now but I think this year they're just getting started. Look up Kansas Forest Service online or see me for details. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Soupy Soils

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Last week the frost finally went out of the ground which meant all of this water perched on top of the soil could finally start to soak in. Prior to that time we essentially had soupy soils, not soupy sails! Now we simply have muddy soils. Neither one should be worked by gardeners however. I know spring fever is rampant but we really need to get these soils dried out before we start working with them. How do you know if it's too wet, well, dick up a trowel full of soil, put it in your hand and squeeze it into a ball. If it quickly starts to fall apart then it's dry enough to till and work. If it forms a ball and stay together, it's still too wet. If you squeeze it to form a ball and water drips out, it's really too wet. Working wet soils is difficult to begin with. But it compacts soil, and makes clods that last all season! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Bug Zappers

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I have yet to see any mosquitoes, but I've already seen ads for the bug zappers. So the question comes to mind of if they work. Two answers to that. Do they attract insects, including mosquitoes? Yes. Most of them use black light which attracts most night time flying insects. Do they kill the insects? IF an insect gets far enough into the zapper to come in contact with the grids, yes. But many insects don't get that far in. A bigger question is whether it'll reduce mosquitoes in your back yard. The answer is likely not. In fact the black light may wind up attracting more mosquitoes and other insect into your back yard than you'd have had otherwise. So you wind up not with the result you were hoping for. I would not buy one for my yard. But an option may be to buy them for your neighbors to put in their yards! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Crabgrass Preventer Timing

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We're finally getting warmer and drier weather so we've got folks starting to apply crabgrass preventer. We are probably a little early as the soil is quite cold for this time of year. IF you are using one of the newer products like Barricade or Dimension you will probably be okay. These have very long residual. But if you are using a product with one of the older herbicides this may be just a little bit early and a second application may well be in order. Look at the label and see what it says. If the reapplication interval is before August 1st, a second application would be recommended to get you through the season as crabgrass can still sprout in August and make seed. If you haven't applied your preventer yet, I'd probably wait another couple of weeks. Personally, I'm aiming for the first week of April to apply mine. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Ornamental Grass Cleanup Time

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you have clumps of ornamental grasses - things like pampas grass or some of its similar but shorter cousins, and you didn't cut it down last fall, then it's time to get it done now. Carefully tie the clump of grass together with twine and then cut it off about 2 to 3 inches high with hand pruners, or hedge shears. The dry grass can be quite irritating so wear long sleeves. Then put this in the burn pile or the trash. IF you live out in the country and the clumps are a safe distance from buildings you can, under calm conditions, burn the clumps off. Make sure you have a burn permit and call for permission. Keep a hose handy when you light these off to make sure that the fire doesn't get away from you. These dry ornamental grasses are very flammable and they burn hot and fast. Pay attention and be safe! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.