

Gardening with Chuck Programs for November 25 - December 1, 2019

Poinsettia Care

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Poinsettias are a semitropical shrub that we use as a holiday decoration in a cold time of the year. You want to protect them from cold when you bring them home from the store but then put them in a sunny window but don't let the leaves touch cold glass. Ideal daytime temperatures are 65 to 75 and overnight temperatures of 60 to 65. Temperatures over 75 will shorten bloom life and under 60 will cause root rot. Make sure that you keep the plant watered when the soil is dry to the touch but make sure that there is drainage so you don't drown the plant. If you ever let the plant wilt, the leaves will fall off even when the floral bracts continue to look fine. While many gardeners like to try to keep their poinsettia around until next year, I'm a firm believer in tossing it and buying a new one next year! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Christmas Tree Care

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Roughly 50% of homes in the US have a real Christmas tree. Many of those are purchased the first few days after Thanksgiving so here's a few pointers. Buy as fresh a tree as possible - hint, the needles should smell really fresh and evergreeny. When you get the tree home get it in a stand with plenty of fresh water, BUT cut off about 3/8 to a half inch of the bottom of the trunk first. You need to remove the sealed over sap at the cut end so that it can take up water. The first few days the tree is up it is likely to take up a lot of water. Check it 2 or 3 times a day. As we get deeper into the season you may only need to add water once or twice a day, but don't let it run out of water. The tree will dry down as we get to the end of December so be sure to get the tree down and out of the house soon after Christmas. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

No Ashes in Gardens

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. There is a misconception that there are a lot of plant nutrients in wood ashes from the stove or fireplace. Some of this may come from the concept of slash and burn agriculture in the tropics. So people will routinely add ashes to their garden. Wherever this notion came from it probably needs to be stopped. Ashes do have potassium, which most of our soils don't need, but very little phosphorus and no nitrogen, which our soils do need. But the bigger problem that I see is that ashes will raise the soil pH. If you know from a soil test that your garden soil is too acidic then ashes can help to neutralize some of that acidity. Unfortunately most of our soils have too high of a pH to begin with and adding ashes just makes it worse. If you know you have an acid soil, go ahead and add them, otherwise just get rid of them. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

No Program, Thanksgiving

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Poinsettias are Not Poisonous

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I am still routinely asked if Poinsettias are poisonous. No, they are not poisonous. In fact, over the years some large poinsettia growers have publicly eaten poinsettia leaves just to prove the point. But I wouldn't advise you to eat them. Poinsettias are a Euphorbia and these plants tend to have milky sap that can be irritating to the skin and especially mucous linings and we can never rule out allergic reactions to the sap. I would not put the plants where dogs or cats can eat them as the sap may cause them to vomit and who wants to clean up that mess? There are other members of the Euphorbia family that have sap that contains compounds that can cause issues. You may have some of those plants in your house right now and don't know it. But go ahead and buy that poinsettia, they are safe to have! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.