

Wrapping up Tomato Season

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If your tomato plants are still alive after that brush with winter recently, they probably won't be alive much longer. If you have tomatoes still on the vine some of them can be picked, brought inside and allowed to ripen indoors. Any tomato that is mostly red won't take long to ripen when you bring it in. Any tomato that has any color change started can be brought in. Lastly, any tomatoes that are green but full sized and have a white star shaped zone on the bottom end of the green fruit can be brought in. Discard any tomatoes with defects, rots or breaks in the skin. Place tomatoes on cardboard trays but not touching and put layers of newspaper between the layers of tomatoes if stacking. This keeps rot from spreading. Try to keep the tomatoes close to 55 degrees and they'll slowly ripen. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fall Soil Testing

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. As you are cleaning up the garden this fall and putting it to bed for the winter, something you could do, maybe even before tilling it, is to collect a soil sample. Take soil randomly from several locations in your garden and mix it all together - then bring in a one pound butter tub to the Extension Office. We'll have it analyzed for pH, soil organic matter, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. IF your pH is out of whack high or low, this fall will be a good time to apply soil amendment to start correcting this. That soil amendment, lime or sulfur, not gypsum, needs to be worked into the soil so it can start interacting with the soil particles so we can start raising or lowering the soil pH. If we also find out that phosphorus is low we can add phosphorus this fall and also incorporate it into the soil profile. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Working Gardens in the Fall

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. One of the last things you want to do in the fall with your garden is to work it up. That is assuming it's dry enough to work without creating clods. If we have very much snow or rain during the winter, that cold soil is slow to dry out in the spring if you want to work it then. If you worked it up in the fall, then it doesn't have to be nearly as dry for you to go in and plant those early season crops like peas and potatoes. It's often easier to get the soil worked down in the fall so you aren't chomping at the bit into April because the soil won't dry out and then you've got April showers - well, it just becomes a mess. Get out there this fall and work the garden up. Add organic matter and till it in. Fall tillage also buries disease laden debris and breaks up and exposes eggs of damaging insects. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Sunscauld Prevention

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Winter time can be tough for young thin barked trees like honeylocust, ash, oaks, maples and fruit trees. During the winter the thin bark, on warm sunny days can warm up enough to get the sap flowing. Then it cools off at night and cells that were warm in the day freeze. This happens on and off during the winter and before long you've got big dead areas on the southwest sides of these young trees.

But you may not notice it until 4 or 5 years later. The best thing to do if you have these kinds of trees, recently planted or just a couple of years old is to wrap them with a light colored tree wrap. Start at the ground level and apply the tree wrap up to the lowest branches. Do this in October or November but then be sure to remove the wrap in March. Leaving it on the tree past March can lead to other kinds of damage. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Soil Testing

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I talked about soil testing a couple of days ago but many people sometimes aren't sure what they are testing for. Basic soil testing is looking at the nutrients and soil chemistry that impacts plant growth.

What it doesn't test for, that sometimes people want to know about, is chemicals in the soil. Lead from old paint can sometimes be a concern for gardens near old houses or where old houses once were or old brownfield sites. We can arrange to have lead tested for. The one thing that is difficult to test for though is pesticides. Testing for pesticides is not cheap and unless you know exactly what you are testing for, you can wrack up a lot of money in a hurry. If you want to do some testing please call me and I am more than happy to talk with you about it and direct you to labs that can do that testing for you if you want it. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.