

Gardening with Chuck Programs for January 13 - 19, 2020

Radon Awareness

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Let's talk about your house this morning. This is Radon Awareness month. Our part of Kansas is a bit of a hotspot when it comes to radon. Radon isn't like carbon monoxide. Problems from radon, mainly lung cancer, occur after several decades of exposure. I strongly encourage everyone to check the lowest level of their house every few years for radon. If high levels are detected it is something that can be remedied. Remediation isn't difficult and it isn't that expensive, but you need to know your levels. We have radon test kits at the Extension Office for \$5.50 and that price includes the testing. If you've never tested your home for radon, do it now. If it's been more than three years since you've tested your home, do it now. New homes, old homes, it really doesn't matter, just get your house tested. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Starting Onions Indoors

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you want to get onions to plant in your garden you are often restricted to white, yellow or red. If you want a specific variety, you may be out of luck! However, onion seed of named varieties is fairly readily available. But given the lead time to get them up to transplantable size prior to normal planting time in late March, you need to get them started now. Get a greenhouse flat filled with seed starting mix, never actual garden soil, and space your seeds about ½ inch apart. This needs to be in an area that is 75 to 80 degrees. Once the seeds emerge and seedlings are 1 to 2 inches tall, move the flat to a cooler location with strong light, likely some form of grow light. Fertilize lightly and when leaves are about 4 to 5 inches tall start trimming off just the ends of the leaves. Contact me for more information. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Starting Plants Inside, Part 1

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Yesterday I was talking about starting onions from seed. But for our vegetables, that is about the only thing that you should be starting from seed right now. Most vegetable garden species are going to take 4 to 8 weeks from seeding time until the plants are big enough to transplant. So you figure out what your normal planting time is and then back off of that the appropriate amount of time. For example, tomatoes are going to take about 6 weeks to get to transplantable size. If we are planting them around Mother's Day, my recommended time, then 6 weeks before that would be March 29th. If you already have tomatoes seeded in your house, well, good luck! Some flower species though can take 12 weeks or longer. I have a fairly complete chart for vegetables and flowers that you can have by asking! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Starting Plants Inside, Part 2

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Continuing the theme of starting transplants from seed. The biggest issue that most home gardeners have with starting transplants is inadequate light intensity. Even a bright sunny window is not going to be bright enough unless you are in a true greenhouse. For all the rest of us, this is going to mean using lights. To get the light intensity that you need you're going to need fluorescents or LEDs within an inch or two of the tops of the plants. Yes, you really need that bright of light. You can make frames that will hold a couple of 4 foot dual bulb fluorescent or LED light fixtures on chains that you can raise as the plants grow. LEDs can be quite variable so use LEDs that are specifically indicated for grow lights. Regardless of your light source, you need to leave the lights on for about 16 hours a day. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Starting Plants Inside, Part 3

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Finishing up our series of starting transplants yourself from seeds this morning lets talk about a few other items. Watering is critical and you likely will need to do it every few days at the start and perhaps nearly every day just before transplanting. At first, during germination, water when the starting mix surface is dry. Later on the plants will tell you if they are getting dry. Make sure there's good drainage so you don't get root rot. Brushing the plants 20 or 30 strokes a day with your hand can help make stockier plants OR a fan at a slow speed some distance away can sometimes accomplish the same thing. Lastly, about two weeks before transplanting, start moving them outside a few hours each day and increase the exposure every few days to help get the plants acclimated to what they'll soon face. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.