

### All Blooms No Fruit

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Vine crops can be frustrating! Especially for impatient gardeners. I don't know how many times I hear gardeners lamenting that their vine crops are looking great and blooming like crazy but they aren't setting on. Vine crops all have separate male and female flowers and the male flowers start blooming days if not weeks before the female flowers do. It's easy to tell the flower sexes apart. Male flowers are on a long thin filament. Often several inches long. Female flowers are right next to the vine and attaching the vine to the flower is a miniature version of the fruit the vine will produce. It may look like a little squash, cucumber, melon, just whatever species it is. Once those flowers start showing up you should soon start getting fruit. Remember that vine crops need pollinators so easy on the insecticides. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Cracking Tomatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. You've babied your tomatoes through rounds of heavy rain and hot temperatures. You've got a lot of fruit setting on and those big old slicer tomatoes are getting huge and starting to get some wonderful color to them. The morning comes that you want to go out and harvest them only to find that the shoulders of the tomato have cracked! Agggh! Tomato cracking can be small cracks that show up as the fruit heals and leaves little concentric circles, or they can be huge cracks, over a quarter inch wide. Cracking of tomatoes occurs because the fruit takes up water faster than the skin can expand. Basic hydraulic pressure. If it's been a little dry and there's a big rain, the tomato plant sucks up a lot of water and boom, cracks. Keep tomatoes regularly watered, use mulch, basically anything to maintain soil moisture. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Picking A Good Melon

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Picking a good melon when you're in the store can be frustrating. Muskmelon are probably the easiest - pick one that has no green in the skin, and then if it is at room temperature, pick it up and smell it. Get your nose right down on it. If it's ripe it's going to have that classic muskmelon scent about it. No scent, no buy! Where the stem was attached you should also see a nice dish shaped scar.

Watermelons are a bit trickier but two things to look for. As a watermelon ripens it develops a surface roughness near the base of the fruit. Try to feel those with your fingers. Secondly, where the melon rests on the ground, what we call the ground spot, should develop a nice yellow color when ripe. Look for a watermelon that's got the sugar bumps near the base and the yellower the ground spot, the better! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Spider Mites, Round 2

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Spider mites are continuing to be a challenge and if the dry weather they keep talking about really does show up mites will be a big problem. Once you know you know you have them, a good non-chemical approach is to use a strong jet of water aimed at the undersides of the infested leaves. Doing this every morning can knock down a population in fairly short order. There are some chemical treatments but on garden crops they are limited and must be reapplied nearly weekly. AVOID using the long time insecticide Sevin or carbaryl. Sevin does nothing to control mites but very effectively kills the mite predators making the problem worse. The other possibility is to use horticultural oils or insecticidal soaps, like Safers, Spray the undersides of the leaves daily and in the cooler weather of morning. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Soil Test Your Yard Now

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. It's hard to believe but we'll be into September soon and this is when we really need to work on getting our lawns in shape. Most of our heavy fertilization of cool season grasses needs to be done in the fall. Or if you are planting a new lawn, we do that in September. But if you just keep doing what you've always been doing you may not be addressing what the grass really needs. Take the time now to collect a soil sample from your yard. Make a one pint composite sample from several locations. Bring that in to the Extension Office and we'll send it off to K-State for analysis. You may be putting on way more nutrients than you need or not putting the right nutrients down. This is really crucial in new lawns especially if you need to apply more phosphorus or correct a soil pH problem before you plant grass. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.