

Gardening with Chuck Programs for June 1 - 7, 2020

Here Come the Mushrooms

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Let's see. The recipe is 150% or more of normal rainfall in May. Then add average to above average temperatures the first week of June. What's that going to give you? Mushrooms! They were already showing up last week. I was noticing them and others were sending me photos of them. FYI, there's nothing you can do to stop them. Mushrooms are the fruiting body of a wood decay organism, The actual fungal organism is usually below ground and can be large roots or even a buried stump of a tree. Sometimes the tree is long gone, other times it's still present and that's an indicator of concern for the health of a tree. Regardless, you can't stop them. You can remove them as soon as you see them so they are less noticeable and that's about it. Oh, and don't ask me if they're edible. I don't know! Period! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fertilizing Onions

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Onions are heavy feeders with a limited root system. Two crucial things are regular watering, not needed so far but may well soon, and a light fertilization as they are starting to bulb. Onions put on lots of leaf growth but the bulbing, where the bulb in mature onions really develops, happens very fast and late in the growth. To maximize bulb growth you want to get a side or topdress of fertilizer applied now just before the bulbing occurs. Ammonium sulfate or perhaps calcium nitrate sprinkled alongside the row right now is a good idea. Use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of ammonium sulfate or $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of calcium nitrate per 10 foot of row. Lawn fertilizer without herbicide such as a 27-3-3 can be used at $\frac{1}{3}$ cup per 10 foot of row. Apply this a couple inches to the side of the row and water in if it doesn't rain in a day or two. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Mulching Tomatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We normally mulch garden plants, like tomatoes, to help conserve soil moisture, to keep weeds down, moderate soil temperatures and keep soils from crusting. Tomatoes are especially sensitive to fluctuations in soil moisture as this can cause cracking and make blossom end rot problems worse. This year, given the rain last week, you may want to let the soil dry out just a little bit more before applying your mulch. Straw and hay are popular mulching materials but be forewarned that they can bring in weed seeds or even wheat seeds that will sprout and grow. I discourage wood chips as they break down slowly and can be issues in future years. Grass clippings can be used, make sure they are well dried down, only apply 2 or 3 inches deep and that lawn herbicides weren't used recently. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Sawfly Larvae on Ash

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. At least once a year, usually about now, I will receive a rather panicky phone call from someone who has suddenly found all sorts of little light greenish larvae wriggling around on the sidewalk or driveway under their ash tree. It can be somewhat creepy because it all happens at once and people often fear that their tree is about to die because then they look up and notice that the leaves have been eaten. Well, this is the ash sawfly larvae. Sawflies are related to ants and bees. Adults tend to look a little bit like a fly, a little bit like a bee. Right now the sawflies are finishing their feeding. When they are through feeding they just drop to the ground, burrow into the dirt and spend the rest of the summer dormant in pupae that won't emerge until early next spring. No treatment is needed or recommended. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Little Barley

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. About now, many homeowners are starting to notice a rather short grass heading out in their yards that has a tight little compact head. Some homeowners call this foxtail, but it's actually called Little Barley. Before long the plant will start to die and the seedhead will go from being soft and green to hard and tan and the seeds, which look like little badminton shuttlecocks will break loose and wind up in your socks or the pads of your pet's feet. And they will hurt! There's nothing you can do now other than to map out where this plant is growing. The seed germinates in the late summer and establishes itself then. There's nothing you can do now to stop it. But in late August or early September you can apply crabgrass preventer to those locations to keep it from being a problem again in 2021! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.