

Rhubarb

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Rhubarb and asparagus are my two favorite early season vegetable crops probably because we grew a lot of both on the farm when I was growing up. Rhubarb is a little more finicky to grow than asparagus. Rhubarb likes well drained slightly acid soils so we have to be careful to amend the soil prior to planting this long lived perennial crop and make sure it's situated where water readily drains away from it. It's often a good idea to start now to prepare a location and then plant it a year from now. That gives you plenty of time to work lots of well rotted barnyard manure into the soil as in about 1 pound per square foot and then mix it well into the top six to twelve inches of soil. When the crowns are planted you want the buds to be just $\frac{1}{2}$ to one inch below the soil surface and 2 to 3 feet apart with rows 4 to 5 feet apart. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Asparagus Bed Cleanup Time

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. March is the time to get your asparagus planted, if starting a new bed, or your old bed cleared off. Carefully clip off the old stalks at ground level with pruning shears. A mower is easy, but doesn't cut low enough. I don't like to pull the old stalks as you can sometimes pull up part of the crown. If you have weeds and no new growth showing up yet you can spray over the entire bed with glyphosate and then follow up with a garden weed preventer like trifluralin to help control early season weeds. We generally don't want to fertilize established asparagus beds early in the season. We're better off to wait until after the harvest season and then use a balanced 10-10-10 type fertilizer at the rate of about one pound per hundred square feet of bed. This is also a good time to give another treatment of weed preventer. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Potatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Now that we are past St. Patrick's Day I feel that it's time that gardeners can start thinking about planting potatoes. Yeah, if you haven't figured it out by now I'm not a "plant the potatoes on St. Patrick's Day" kind of gardener. And the weather over the past week is a perfect example of why. First of all, it's kind of soggy to be out there trying to work ground and secondly, it's cold. Yes, by late last week soil temperatures were working their way up into the mid 50s. Now they have come crashing back down. Seeds can sit in the ground and slowwwwwly germinate. Potatoes tend to sit in the cold ground and rot requiring a replant. IF you did get potatoes planted yesterday you did it in mud and are going to have a mess when you have to replant those potatoes. Be patient, you can plant them through mid April. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Clean up Iris and Peonies

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Iris and peonies are two perennial flowers that are well suited to Kansas climate and soils. Once in the ground they can survive and thrive for years if not decades. But both are subject to leaf diseases, different leaf diseases, that can weaken them somewhat and diminish blooming. These leaf diseases are carried from one year to the next on infected foliage from the previous year. If you haven't already this is a good time to get all of last year's growth removed from the beds. Carefully cut off everything at ground level and remove it to the trash or a burn pile. Don't just mow over this stuff - for one thing it isn't low enough and for another it just shreds the old leaves up and leaves the disease spores behind. So clean up, take care of any early emerging weeds, sprinkle a little fertilizer and wait! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Wet Soil Alert

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Two weeks ago I went out on a limb and planted some early garden. Not a lot, some peas, radishes, lettuce and a few onion sets. I'll let you know in a few weeks how foolish or lucky I was. But here's the thing - If I hadn't tilled my garden last fall, when it was drier, I never could have gotten those early plantings in. The soil was just dry enough in that top half inch to inch that I could make a row and get the seeds and sets planted without making a mess. Then it rained again. The soil is wet right now. Wet cold soil dries out slowly. You can't be in a hurry to work wet soils because you will make a mess of things right now. That wet soil chunks up, compacts, and makes what we call, clods. When those clods get well dried down they are like bricks. And they last all summer. Wait for the soil to dry down! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.