

## Firescaping

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I came across a new word last week that describes something many people have already been doing. The phrase is firescaping and it essentially means protecting your home and/or your outbuildings from wildfire. Let's face it - we live in a prairie state and we've seen in recent years that under the right conditions we can have devastating uncontrollable wildfires that can burn hundreds of square miles very quickly. This isn't just a phenomenon of the arid west where there's evergreen forests, it can happen here. There are many things that homeowners can do to protect their structures, their home and their property from wildfires. We have a great bulletin from the Kansas Forest Service called Protecting Your Home from Wildfire that's free at the office, pick up a copy and check it out! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Planting Peas

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. While many folks are wanting to plant potatoes first thing in the spring, peas are actually better suited to going in the ground first - in fact you can plant them almost anytime that it dries out enough to make a row. Peas only need a soil temperature of about 40 degrees to germinate and get growing. A few days ago soil temps were in the low 40s. They probably warmed up over the weekend but cloudy weather and a little rain will cool them right back down. But if the soil is dry enough that you can scratch a row without making too many clods then get some early peas planted. Make two rows 6 to 8 inches apart so the floppy plants can support each other. Place seeds two inches apart within the row and if you have older trailing varieties, you may very well want to put up a temporary trellis for the vines to climb up! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Planting Lettuce

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Right after the peas that I talked about yesterday, lettuce is one of the crops that you can get going early in the season. If you started transplant you can be putting them out just anytime the ground dries out enough. Otherwise, you can plant lettuce by direct seeding anytime from now through mid April, in fact you can relay plant lettuce clear through mid May, again in late August and early September. Lettuce grown in cooler temperatures also has a milder flavor. Traditional head lettuce does not do well in Kansas but leaf lettuce, buttercrunch, Bibb and romaine can all do very well. Lettuce has a limited root system so if it starts to get dry keep it well watered. It's also one crop you can really push the fertilizer to. Since you're eating the leaves it's okay to give it some extra nitrogen for leafy growth! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Potatoes on St. Patrick's Day

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Potatoes originated in the Andes mountains of Peru. So where this notion of planting a crop native to South America on the celebration of the patron saint of Ireland came from is totally beyond me! Yes, potatoes often do best planted in March, or early July, but St. Patrick's Day is often just a bit early. You should never plant anything by the calendar but rather based on soil temperatures. Right now things are kind of wet and cold and the March outlook is to stay below normal. You really want that soil to get dried out first and warmed up to 50 degrees. We are currently running in the low 40s. It may warm up by St. Patrick's Day, but don't push the issue especially if you need to work your ground still. It's going to be several weeks before the soil is dry enough that you can safely till it, so slow down! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Pruning Shrubs

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Daylight Savings time starts on Sunday. We'll have an extra hour of daylight at the end of the day. This is a dangerous time for gardeners as it's still a little bit early in the season and on nice evenings homeowners will be wandering around wanting something to do. They eye the spirea, or lilac or forsythia shrubs that put on some extra growth last year and think, aha, this would be a good time to prune those. Put the pruning shears down and step away from the shrubbery. These, and others, are species that bloom first thing in the spring. Those flower buds were formed late last winter and are often sitting out on the ends of the branches. If you prune now, you'll remove or greatly reduce the amount of flowers that you will have this spring. Wait and prune these just after they bloom. NOT now! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.