

Gardening with Chuck Programs for September 14 - 20, 2020

Reblooming Holiday Cacti

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. You can call them Christmas cactus or Thanksgiving cactus, they are different by the way, but regardless, if you want them to bloom, it takes a series of nights longer than days or temperatures of 59 to 69 degrees. It takes 25 consecutive days of long night treatment to initiate blooming and then 9 to 10 weeks for floral buds to develop and open. Very soon we will past the natural threshold of nights longer than days. If you have your plants where they only receive natural sunlight the 25 days will likely be enough to trigger blooming regardless of temperature. A sunny porch may be the place to put them for the next few weeks. Try to avoid letting them be below 50 degrees for very long as that inhibits blooming. If you have them indoors you may want to put them in a closet at night. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Get Your Garlic Ordered

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Garlic is best planted in late October or early November for the best yields. Which means it's time to get your garlic ordered from a good garlic supplier and you'd better hurry because many suppliers are running low already. While it may be enticing to just go to the grocery store and buy some garlic and plant it, I strongly discourage that. First of all you have no idea where it came from or what cultivar it is. More than likely it grew in California and is California Early or Late. Secondly, you don't know if it's been sprayed with sprout inhibitors or even how disease free it may be. I can give you a bunch of recommendations for better cultivars to grow and where to get them so that they are certified stock. California grows a lot of garlic as does Mexico. But let me help you find something well suited to Kansas! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Watch for Yellowjackets

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. From now until we start to have consistent freezes we really need to be alert to the potential of yellowjackets.

These hornets nest in the ground and by this time of year the colonies are getting good sized and they have no sense of humor. I knew we had a colony somewhere around the farm and I found them mowing the other evening. I always am looking ahead to where I just mowed this time of year and sure enough there they were swarming around low to the ground where I'd just mowed.

I saw them in time and steered clear of them leaving a patch of unmowed grass to relocate the nest. Then it turned cold and you don't want to tackle nest elimination when it's cold. Once it warmed up I finally found the entrance hole and an after dark attack with two cans of hornet spray ended that threat for this year! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Harvesting Sweet Potatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Even though we call them sweet potatoes, they are in no way related to real or Irish potatoes. Sweet potatoes are a tropical vine and they despise cold weather. Even those several days of below 50 degree weather we had last week is to their dislike but fortunately the ground was still warm. Sweet potatoes do not lose quality as they grow larger so we often want to leave them in the ground as long as possible but we need to get them harvested before a killing freeze as that can diminish root quality and shorten storage life. Get them dug and treat them carefully as the skin is tender when it's first dug. Then try to get them in a humid area with temperatures of 85 to 90 degrees for 5 to 10 days to let the skin toughen up and start converting starches to sugars. Then store at room temperature, NEVER below 55. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fall Care of Asparagus and Rhubarb

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Even though harvest of asparagus and rhubarb is long past we can still impact next year's crop through proper care now. First of all do NOT fertilize either one in the fall. Fertilize rhubarb in early spring, March, and asparagus just as soon as you finish harvesting it next spring. As long as the plants are still green just keep them going, watering if it turns off dry again. The rain last week likely will get us through to frost but if frost is late and it turns off hot and dry, water! The longer the foliage of both of these stays active the more root reserves the plants will build up for next year's growth. Once we get some good hard freezes you can just let the rhubarb die down and dry up. Asparagus fronds and stems can be cut off after they turn brown or left in place to collect snow and removed early next spring. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.