

Gardening with Chuck Programs for September 21 - 27, 2020

Garden Cleanup

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. When it gets to late summer many gardeners have just had it with their garden and they mow it all down, spray it all with roundup or just walk away from it and will decid what to do with it later. These are all really bad choices, understandable, but bad choices. Plants like tomatoes that have had diseased leaves can carry that disease on to next year if the leaves are left in the garden. I like to get a lot of that old plant material from this year's garden off the garden spot and into the burn pile or the trash. If you've got a good hot compost pile going, some residue can go in there. If you've got a lot of foxtail and crabgrass, removing the entire plant will help get a lot of that seed out of there too. One way or another you want to have bare soil going into winter as this will help reduce insect and disease problems next year. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Re-blooming A Poinsettia

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. While many of us prefer to buy new poinsettias each Christmas thereby supporting the poinsettia industry, there is a certain challenge in keeping last year's poinsettia alive and then getting it to rebloom. The trigger to make a poinsettia bloom is mainly based on nights longer than days and moderate temperatures. It takes six weeks of keeping poinsettia's in the dark for at least 12 hours nightly to get them to initiate bud development. But make sure they get put in direct sunlight during the day. If you miss one night of dark treatment, add two more days at the end. Once you have completed the 6 weeks of dark treatment it's going to take another 4 to 6 weeks for them to develop maximum color and bloom. If you want your poinsettias to be blooming at Christmas you need to be starting now! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Work The Garden Now For Next Spring

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Gardeners need to start planning for next year's garden NOW! That includes clearing off the garden spot like I mentioned a couple days ago and also deciding where you are going to plant your early season crops like potatoes and peas and getting that area tilled up now. Fall is typically drier and the soil warmer than in the spring so it's easier to get it worked up now. Fall tillage also exposes a lot of insect pests that may be pupating in the ground or destroys egg cases of pests like grasshoppers. With the soil worked up this fall you can get in there in March and get your peas and potatoes planted. Even when it is too wet to till, you just need a couple of dry inches at the top of the soil profile to make a furrow and get your seed in the ground. Also remember to rotate your crops to help control diseases next year. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Plant Spring Flowering Bulbs

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The bulbs have been for sale in garden centers for over a month now but we are just now coming into the normal time frame for planting spring flowering bulbs which includes the likes of tulips and daffodils.

The last week of September is the earliest that I want to plant these and prefer to wait into October. Then if you can get some great buys on end of season bulbs, you can even plant into November - they'll just bloom a little later the first spring. It's important to plant them at the depth that is recommended. That'll lengthen the time until you need to dig and reset them. I also like to sprinkle a little bone meal in the bottom of the planting hole and mix into the soil below. It's also far more attractive to plant bulbs in clumps of the same kind rather than spread out in a hit and miss fashion. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Storing Sweet Potatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Last week I talked about harvesting sweet potatoes and just wanted to spend a little more time talking about sweet potato storage. While sweet potatoes are a starchy root of a tropical vine they also have high levels of sugar in them, hence the "sweet" part of it. But being a tropical vine they want nothing to do with temperatures below 55 degrees. Period. Storing sweet potatoes, either ones you grew or bought in the store below 55 degrees injures the root, shortens the storage life and gives them an off flavor. I honestly just keep sweet potatoes on my kitchen counter and they'll easily last a month. Even if a few sprouts start to form, just rub them off before cooking.

Keeping them away from direct sunlight also helps and the darker the better, but for the sake of everything sweet, don't put them in the fridge! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.