

Gardening with Chuck Programs for December 13 - 19, 2021

Christmas Presents for Gardeners, Part 1

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Some of the hardest people to buy presents for are gardeners. Tomorrow some high tech ideas, today some low tech ideas. Never try to buy a gardener a new tool UNLESS they have given you very specific details. The quality tools that I recommend you quite honestly are not likely to find at a big box store or a local hardware store. There simply is not the demand in our area for stores to stock the true high end tools that I'd recommend for serious gardeners. Your best bet may be ordering online so ask your gardener for detailed information of tool, part number, and ordering location. Yes, spending \$50 on a pair of hand pruners or \$100 on a shovel may seem excessive, but I can guarantee you that 30 years later your gardener will still be using that tool and it will still be working just like new! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Christmas Presents for Gardeners, Part 2

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Something I feel more gardeners should be purchasing are the personal weather stations that are available.

Yes, a good weather station that is wireless and accurate is likely going to cost you \$150 to \$200 or more, but it's the best way to know what is happening at your gardeners yard. I had an old one that had worn out and received one for a birthday present late last winter. It had a remote temperature sensor that allowed me to hang it in my fruit trees during critical blooming periods and I could see exactly how cold it got every night and for how long. It gave me the advance notice that I needed to see that I would have a great fruit crop this year. Plus it's fun to just monitor everyday weather conditions. If you need suggestions on weather stations, give me a call and I'll be happy to help you! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Firewood

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you want to have fun with a bunch of folks who burn wood in a wood stove or fireplace, just mention that pound for pound, all wood has the same number of BTUs. One pound of oven dry hardwood, any species, has 8,600 BTUs. Softwoods, evergreens, due to the resins in their sap that remain after drying, actually have more BTUs, at 9,050 BTUs per pound. Where the difference comes in is bulk density. Some species need a smaller mass of firewood to make up a pound. Trees like oak, mulberry, black locust or honeylocust, are denser and a cord of wood of these is going to weigh more than a cord of cottonwood. So any tree species will work as firewood, it just depends on how often you want to stoke the fire. As always, make sure your firewood is well dried, store it off the ground and keep it covered. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Potatoes in Cold Storage

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. One of the great things about Irish potatoes is that they will last in cold storage for quite a long time.

Unfortunately if they are in cold storage (meaning under 40 degrees) for a considerable length of time, the starches can start to convert to sugars. They are still okay to eat, they just may taste a little sweet which will seem quite odd. Fortunately, this is a reversible reaction. If these potatoes are placed at room temperature for 2 or 3 days all the sugars will convert back to starches. If you are keeping a large quantity of potatoes in your refrigerator such that some may be in there for four to six weeks, you might run into this problem. I'd suggest that you always keep one meal's worth of potatoes at room temperature and when you use those up, get more out of the refrigerator so they can warm up! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Mouse Damage on Young Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Every year I see shrubs and sometimes small trees that have had extensive bark chewing by rodents, primarily from the various mouse and rat species. While most of this damage is on stands of wild plums and chokecherries, it can also occur on young thin barked trees like maples and fruit trees. The best way to prevent damage from happening is to make sure that the micro habitat around these trees is not favorable to mice especially. Make sure that weeds and grass around these trees is mowed down. If you mulch your trees make sure that no mulch is touching the trunk of the tree. Think of a doughnut of mulch, not a volcano. The more exposed the base of the tree the more threatened a mouse will feel and will avoid that area. You can also use paper tree trunk wrap to add a little more protection. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.