

## Gardening with Chuck Programs for January 4 - 10, 2021

### A New Year, Some New Goals

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. A year ago nobody could have imagined how our year was going to go! We literally all got sent to our rooms in March and there we sat. But this year we have a better idea of what to expect for the first part of the year at least. Which means that at the start of the gardening season, I'm thinking that a lot of us will still be spending quite a bit of time at home. Even if things are opening up a little by April or May, there's nothing wrong with staying at home and gardening. So take some time here at the start of the year to do more in your yard and garden this spring. After last year's debacle I didn't even make resolutions for this year. But go ahead and just make some plans to perhaps garden more deliberately and less haphazardly. Make it a point to spend more time in the yard and garden and enjoy your outdoors! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Wildlife Plantings

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. In decades gone by we talked about tree and shrub plantings for wildlife, and I still encourage that. But now days we are also becoming more aware of the need to plant for pollinators and butterflies as many of these species are in trouble and need some help. The Kansas Forest Service sells seedling trees and shrubs for purchase in bulk to make it more economical to plant habitat. While many of the trees and shrubs they sell are in bundles of 25 of the same species, they do have special pollinator bundles that are good for butterflies and other pollinators. These bundles have a mix of 5 or 6 different species that are ideal for a small lot. If you live in the country or have at least a half acre you can also consider getting these bundles or a unit of trees or shrubs. You can order on line or pick up order forms at my office. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## January, A Time to Plan

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. For the gardener, January can seem interminably long. Christmas is over, the seed catalogs are hitting the mailbox and it seems like spring is forever away. I view January as a time to plan. You can get outside on nice afternoons and walk around your yard and gardens. When you aren't distracted by blossoms and leaves you can take time to look at the entirety of your trees examining them for potential issues. You can examine your landscaping to see if there are shrubs, trees or perennials that have gotten out of hand and need to be removed or pruned. You can look for gaps that can be filled with appropriate plant material. Gardeners are often known to be long on planting but far too short on planning. Take the time in January and even February to critically look at your plants and landscape, and do some planning! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Few Birds at the Feeders?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. It isn't uncommon for me to field questions from backyard bird feeders about why they don't have very many birds, or any birds, at their feeders. Rarely it may be bad feed. Or it may be cats in the neighborhood or even small hawks. But far more often it's simply a case of impatient homeowners. This year we have had abundant natural food sources. The flooding at Milford Lake in 2019 resulted in abundant growth of all sorts of wild sunflowers and other seed laden plants. If you spend time around these areas on a bright sunny morning they are loaded with birds. But as those food sources start to dwindle and especially in times of snowy or icy weather, you should find more and more birds appearing at your feeders. Often the busiest time at my feeders is in April and May! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Bird Seed Preferences

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. One of the things I hear from backyard bird feeder owners is the amount of seed that gets thrown out of feeders and on to the ground. The main cause of that is using the wrong feed in hanging bird feeders. The birds that come to hanging bird feeders want oil seeds sunflower, safflower, niger thistle or peanuts. Grains like millet, milo, wheat and corn are generally only going to be eaten by species that feed on the ground. The birds coming to the hanging feeder throw it out as they try to get to the sunflower seeds! Stop buying those cheap mixes with lots of grains in them and start using only black oil sunflower in those hanging feeders. It may cost more per 20 pound bag, but you'll find much less of it on the ground. If you want to feed the cheaper mixes, put it in a ground feeder or low level feeder. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.