

Blister Beetles

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. More than one gardener has gone out to the garden on a summer morning only to find garden plants nearly demolished and a swarm of black, gray or brown-striped longish beetles covering plants, devouring plants. These are blister beetles. They travel in swarms and can literally descend on your garden overnight and can be gone just as fast. You can not predict when and where blister beetles will pop up but they are fairly easy to control with most any garden insecticide. Mix and use according to label directions and follow postharvest waiting intervals. BUT, blister beetles get their name for a good reason. They have chemicals in their body fluids that will cause large blisters if you get them on your skin. While hand picking is good for some garden pests, you may not want to do it with blister beetles! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Weird Vine Crops

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I routinely am asked about getting a weird squash or a weird pepper and questions about was their plant crossbred by something else. In many cases crossing of these different crops, especially vine crops, is impossible as they have different numbers of chromosomes. All squash and pumpkins CAN cross pollinate. But cucumbers, watermelons and muskmelons all have different chromosome numbers from each other and squash and can NOT cross pollinate. Tomatoes and peppers are closely related and in theory may cross pollinate. But the results of any cross pollination would only become apparent if those seeds were grown out - it wouldn't impact this year's fruit. If this year's fruit looks weird, it's because of cross pollination in the seed production field wherever that was. OR, if you kept your own seed back, then it happened there. But not this year, in your garden! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Are You Watering Enough?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. It's summer and it's hot. Sometimes we get timely rains, more often we don't. So supplemental watering is usually needed in vegetable or flower gardens and definitely needed with anything growing in pots. When we are in the heat of summer with highs in the 80s and 90s, potted plants need to be watered daily. Carefully add water to fill it up to the brim, let it soak in and then come back a second or third time to get enough water in to soak up the whole soil mass. Use a slow running open hose or soaker or drip hoses in gardens. Sprinklers are a last choice because they wet the foliage and often aren't ran long enough to apply enough water. It's going to take an inch of water to soak up 6 inches of soil. Slow application rates will allow water to soak in without running off. The one thing not to do is to stand there with a hose and some nozzle spritzing water around. It does no good whatsoever! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Remove Suckers and Watersprouts

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Fruit trees, especially apple trees, are notorious for growing suckers and watersprouts during the summer. Watersprouts are small branches that sprout from branches and grow straight up very rapidly. Suckers grow from the base of the tree or even from the roots. Both of these use water and nutrients that could and should be going into fruit production. Yes, you can cut them all out late next winter when you are pruning but you'd often be better off to trim them out as they show up. Yes, it may mean every couple of weeks you are out there rubbing those new sprouts off of pruning them off. But research has shown that removing these shoots and watersprouts in the summer results in less regrowth next year. Winter pruning guarantees regrowth. And whatever you do, do not put any herbicide especially on suckers because the herbicide will go into the tree's system and cause damage! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Kill Bermudagrass Now

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you have bermudagrass in your lawn and you want to get rid of it, the only option is to kill everything and reseed. Now is the time to do that. Water the bermudagrass so it's growing well and then spray it with glyphosate. Wait two weeks, mow it low, water it and wait for new sprouts that weren't killed to show up. Repeat the whole process and even a third time. Bermudagrass is tough and has to be controlled when it is actively growing, which is right now. Then once it all appears to be dead, till up the area and get ready to reseed with your desired grass, tall fescue or bluegrass, in early September. A couple of caveats now - spray further out in the lawn than you think it goes. Bermudagrass is tricky that way. Secondly, if you have a neighbor that has bermudagrass you may want to think twice because your lawn will eventually be re-invaded by their bermudagrass after a few years. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.