

Gardening with Chuck Programs for July 5 - 11, 2021

All Blooms, No Fruit

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We talked last week about tomatoes not setting fruit when it's hot, but gardeners will often notice other vegetable crops not setting fruit even though they are blooming like crazy, most noticeably with the vine crops and early in the season, like now. The problem is that all the vine crops have separate male and female flowers on the same plant. Male flowers will start blooming as much as 2 weeks earlier than the female flowers and frequently way outnumber the female flowers. It's easy to distinguish the sex of the flower though. Female flowers are attached close to the vine by what looks like a miniature version of a squash, melon, cucumber, what ever. The male flowers are attached to the vine by a long slender filament several inches long. Eventually female flowers will show up so just be patient! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Bagworm Musings

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We are well into bagworm season yet several people have called saying they've seen very few if any bagworms. Don't worry, they aren't planning a sneak attack. While there are still problem areas around I noticed last summer that the numbers seemed to be waning which goes along with the natural cycling of many pests. Additionally, with very conscientious spraying programs the past few years there have also been fewer bagworms reaching maturity to lay eggs. I noticed a few, but not many bagworms at the farm. I won't rule out that February's cold snap also decreased numbers but it's hard to know for sure. Regardless, if you've had problems in the past go ahead and treat if you haven't already. I sprayed my trees a couple weeks ago just to make sure and I'll likely treat again soon. Keep checking and if you aren't finding any, they're about a half inch long now, count your blessings! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fall Gardens Start in July

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We talk every year about fall gardens. The calendar turns to September and people start calling me about what they can plant for a fall garden. Unfortunately, by September it's getting too late! Fall gardens really start in July. Now, not all spring garden crops are suited to fall gardens so listen close to what you can be planting in July. In early July we've got snap beans, cabbage, broccoli and even potatoes. Later in July you can add carrots and cauliflower. Then in late August and early September you can put lettuce, radishes, spinach and turnips in the ground. If you're really adventurous you can use floating row covers on those leafy crops like lettuce and spinach and keep them going well into November or even December most years. But keep an eye out for weeds and insect pests. Many insects are already at full strength and they will find your new plants in a hurry so be ready! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Falling Hackberry Leaves

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I had a homeowner bring in a bag of leaves from their hackberry tree the other day. They were all concerned because leaves were falling off like it was fall and they were afraid it was dying. The leaves were loaded with little bumps that are caused by a little insect called the hackberry psyllid or sometimes the hackberry nipplegall maker. Each of those bumps, if you cut it open, has a tiny insect in it feeding away safely protected from predators or pesticides. The tree was simply shedding these heavily infested leaves in self defense. The hot dry weather may have hastened the process a bit but the trees and this pest have co-existed for centuries so they won't kill the tree. With cooler weather and a little bit of rain the tree can easily put on some new leaves that will be quite free of this insect pest and more capable of providing the nutrients that the tree needs to thrive and prosper! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Japanese Beetle Season

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Early July is the when we move into the Japanese beetle season. This three to six week long period of time can be frustrating. Japanese beetles are a classic scarab beetle (think June bug like) about a half inch long with really shiny coppery wings, a hint of green and white dots along the side of it's abdomen. They have spent late last summer and earlier this year as a small white grub in the soil feeding undetected on plant roots. The adults are now emerging, they love company and they will swarm over some of their favorite plants like roses, lindens, birch, crabapples, grapes and Virginia creeper. They'll eat almost any part of the plant. Do not confuse these with the very large Green June Beetles that will show up later. You can go out early in the morning and spray Japanese beetles with a garden insecticide OR go along with a bucket of soapy water and a brush and just brush them into the bucket. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.