

Gardening with Chuck Programs for June 14 - 20, 2021

Fast Transition Can Cause Problems

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. May was wet and cool. Then in the space of about one week it went from soggy conditions to near drought conditions with hot, humid, rainfree conditions. The problem is that the change happened so abruptly that many plants weren't prepared for it yet. When it is cool and moist, many plants are prone to not developing vigorous root systems because they haven't needed to OR because the soil was so oxygen depleted from being saturated that it wasn't good root growing conditions. When it turns off hot and dry so fast the plants may well need to be pampered with a little extra water for a week or two as the roots catch up. Check plants in the evening and again first thing in the morning. A plant that is wilted in the morning needs water, now, but maybe not one that is wilted in the afternoon. Check daily! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fruit Tree Management

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. In addition to pruning fruit trees in the late winter and routinely spraying for pests and diseases there are a few other things you need to do with your fruit trees. If your tree, thinking apples or pears mainly this year as few peaches even bloomed, has a lot of fruit on it you need to go through and manually remove some of the fruit. Leaving too much fruit will result in lots of small fruit which is a pain to deal with. By carefully removing some fruit you will increase the size of the fruit left. You'll get about the same pounds of fruit, but each one will be bigger. Think one apple, on average, per every 6 to 8 inches of branch length. Remove water sprouts when you see them. These are fast growing thin branches that go straight up from existing branches. If you didn't fertilize at bloom, the preferred time, do it now. And don't wait for the soil to get too dry - water once a week if it doesn't rain. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Easy on the Fertilizer

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I've noticed that most gardeners either way under-fertilize or go way over the top with far too much fertilizer.

Few do it correctly. Tomatoes are the one garden plant that are likely to be over fertilized though and the impact can be devastating to someone craving fresh tomatoes. If you apply too much nitrogen fertilizer, without adequate levels of phosphorus, you can get a tomato plant 10 feet high with few or no tomatoes or even blossoms. Tomatoes are best fertilized before planting and then side-dressed with nitrogen three times during the growing season. The first application is two weeks before the first tomato ripens, The second about two weeks after the first tomato ripens and the third one a month after the second. If you know you have adequate phosphorus then you can use a nitrogen only source like blood meal or nitrate of soda. If you aren't sure, then use 1 cup of 13-13-13 per 30 feet or row. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Slime Molds

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Slime molds are primitive life forms that are somewhere between plants and I'm not sure what. The spores float through the air, land on plants or mulch or simply any substrate to grow on, quickly go through a life cycle obtaining all their nutrients and water from the air. Then they go away leaving dried up remains behind. We've been having good growing conditions for slime molds and they are going to show up in one of two common forms. One looks like ash or charcoal powder on the blades of grass. The other one is going to be on mulch or sometimes lawn area and quite frankly looks like dog vomit. The dog vomit mold stands out like a sore thumb. The ashy one on grass most people don't notice until they mow over it. The good thing is you don't need to do anything about either of them. If the dog vomit form bothers you just scoop it up and throw it away. The one on the grass can be washed off with water. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Don't Scalp the Lawn

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I was driving down the street the other day and while waiting for the light to change I noticed the person mowing the lawn next to me. I noticed them because it was a cloud of dirt. This poor misinformed individual had set the lawnmower about as low as it could be set and was cutting the grass so low he was into the crown of the turfgrass. There is a mistaken notion that mowing a lawn lower means you don't have to mow it as often - which is incorrect. When you mow a lawn low you are removing the food production factory, leaves, that the grass plant needs to survive and thrive. You also expose a lot of bare soil and where there is bare soil mother nature will grow anything she can, which is what we typically call weeds. Clearly this person doesn't like mowing this lawn and he doesn't want to have to do it again soon. Sadly, if he keeps doing this, he won't have a lawn, just weeds! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.