

Gardening with Chuck Programs for June 28 - July 4, 2021

Warm Overnight Temperatures

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We're pretty well become entrenched in some classic summertime weather conditions. We've already had more than our fair share of hot days and warm humid nights. These kinds of conditions not only stress plants but they can cause many different issues. Anytime we have humid conditions and several consecutive nights with temperatures that stay above 70 we will start to see brown patch in tall fescue and it will be worse in irrigated lawns. Keep in mind that this is not a terminal disease - it just makes your lawn look ugly for a while. These conditions also make watering of potted plants a once sometimes twice a day thing. Heat will also mess up pollination of plants and I will be talking about these in the days and weeks ahead. In the meantime, keep your gardens well watered! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Corn Earworm

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The nemesis of anyone trying to grow sweet corn is the corn earworm. This is the caterpillar that enters the ear at the silk end and goes chewing it's way through the developing kernels at the tip of the ear. If you grow sweet corn you have to treat for this or be ready to cut out a lot of each ear. Moths lay eggs in the developing green silks, the eggs hatch and the larvae eat their way down to the kernels. Once the silks turn brown they are no longer a threat but up until then insecticides will need to be applied to the silks every few days. Home garden insecticides labeled for earworms come down to cyfluthrin or spinosad, I'd encourage you to consider using spinosad because it is an organic control and very effective against earworms. Plan to treat the silks every three days until the silks turn brown which is about a two week period. Then wait one day before harvest. Always read and follow label directions! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Dutch Elm Disease

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. In my drive into work every day I've been seeing a lot of American and red elms with leaves turning brown and dying, and the leaves will tend to hang on for quite some time. These are the classic symptoms of Dutch Elm Disease. Dutch Elm Disease is still around and is generally carried from tree to tree by the elm bark beetle. The disease is a fungus that grows inside and eventually kills the vessels that move water and nutrients throughout the tree. Trying to control the pest by spraying for the insect is ineffective. There are expensive systemic fungicide treatments that can be done to protect trees, but they have to be done every three years or so. If you still have American or red elms on your property and they start to show symptoms the disease the best thing to do is cut them down and burn them up as soon as possible. There are some good resistant American Elms that you can replant with however! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Onion Harvesting

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. In spite of the heat my onions are looking great right now and probably 2 to 3 weeks from harvest still. Onions are ready to harvest when about half of the plants have tops that have fallen over. At that time you need to get the onions out of the ground so that the bulbs don't sunburn but you still want to dry them down before moving them to storage. Dig them and spread them out on screens or anything until the necks of the plants are very dry. Alternatively you can hang them to dry. Tie 4 to 10 onions together with twine, depending on the size of the bulbs. You want to make sure that you'll get good air circulation through the bundle. Once the necks have dried out, 2 to 4 weeks depending on weather, cut the tops off, leaving a bit of the neck, and trim the roots. Store in mesh bags in a cool dry location. Never store in a refrigerator or in a sealed plastic bag! Onions should last about 3 months in storage. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Tomatoes and Heat

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. While tomatoes need warm weather for optimal growth, high heat meaning daytime highs above 95 will cause tomatoes to bloom, but not set fruit. Fruit that set on before the heat is left unaffected other than it may cause the fruit to be slow to develop normal mature color. While we've known of this issue for a long time, it was fairly recently that we discovered why. When a pollen grain lands on the stigma of the flower it then starts to grow a pollen tube down through the style to the ovule where fertilization takes place. This happens fairly quickly, but when we have those high daily temperatures, the pollen tube literally explodes thereby preventing pollination and the flower just shrivels and dies. Once daytime high temperatures cool down below that critical 95 degree range, fertilization will resume. Attempts to cool the plant with sprinkling won't help and will make more disease issues. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.