

Gardening with Chuck Programs for November 29 - December 5, 2021

Christmas Greenery

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Last week I talked about keeping Christmas trees fresh through the season but there are many other forms of fresh greenery that we use in our homes at these holiday times. While Christmas trees are a bit of a challenge to keep fresh, holiday greenery is even harder simply because it rarely has a water source. Holly and other evergreen broadleaf plants don't concern me as much as anything that's an evergreen like pine, fir or spruce. As these dry they become highly flammable. If possible buy multiple rounds of the greenery, keep extra in a box in a cool dry place and then replace the greenery as it dries out which will only take 10 to 14 days inside our homes. Check a needle or two every couple of days to see if they bend or break, replacing when they break. And never use open flames near this greenery. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

I've Got Gnats in My House

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. A couple of weeks ago I took a peace lily (*Spathiphyllum*) that was severely pot bound and split it into three plants and repotted them. One went in the house and one came to work with me. About ten days later I had little gnats flying around my house AND my office. I'm not surprised by this at all.

There are several species of flies and gnats (the two are closely related) that will live in potting soil, especially pots that are outside in the summer as this one was. I did not treat the soil with an insecticide drench before bringing it in because I knew I was going to be splitting the plant and repotting it. In areas of the house that you don't spend a lot of time you can use no-pest strips to knock down the flying adults. But I will likely have to do an insecticide drench of the potting soil to really cure the problem. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Maybe One More Watering of Woodies

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. For the past five months we are at 2/3 of normal precipitation. Which, as we head into winter, is not necessarily a good thing, especially when they are forecasting that winter could be warmer and drier than normal. Trees and shrubs, especially evergreen trees and shrubs need to have their root zone well watered going into winter as they will continue to carry on photosynthesis on warm days which requires water. If there is no water in the root zone the tree will steal from its own foliage, the needles, causing some of the needles to dry out and then die weeks or months later. Take advantage of nice days yet this fall to put a slow running garden hose or a soaker hose out under evergreen trees and shrubs to soak up that top foot or two of soil. Don't use a root feeder as these put the water below the root zone! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Keep One Hose Close at Hand

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Spent part of a Saturday afternoon recently pulling hoses up to the shop and blowing them out with compressed air, then coiling them up and tucking them away for the winter. I've got a couple of other hoses that I'll blow the water out of but will leave them where I can get to them easily during the winter. The reason is simple. It's been dry - we talked about that yesterday. But I'm still planting spring flowering bulbs and some of those went into pretty dry soil so I need to water them down yet. And then I'll blow them out again. I've got some evergreens that I may need to water again before the winter is over, although I'm still holding out for rain or snow. If we get into early January and we haven't had adequate precipitation, I'll pick some warm days and water them down again. You gotta be prepared! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Winterizing Strawberry Beds

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. While strawberries are pretty tough and reliable for our Kansas climate, they aren't indestructible.

When it finally froze a couple weeks ago it went down to the low 20s pretty fast and may have nipped a few plants but not to the point that I'm concerned about them. But it does point out the need that strawberries will do better if you can mulch them in late fall. The idea of mulching is to help keep dormant plants dormant so it's important that we get the plants dormant first and the ground cooled off. Both of those things are in process as of now. In another few weeks take the time to mulch your strawberry bed with good seed free wheat straw or prairie hay. Apply it about three inches deep, fluffed up that is, and then water it down good with a hose or a sprinkler. This will help hold it in place this winter! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.