

Gardening with Chuck Programs for October 25 - 31, 2021

Late Season Weed Control

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We're into the last week of October. Last week I was talking about really getting after the weed and feed or even just the weed control. Depending on the conditions in any given year you can sometimes treat for weeds clear into early December IF we haven't had temperatures below 20 degrees. Most of the weeds that we are trying to control in our lawns don't really shut down for the winter until we get temperatures below 20. For these herbicides to work the plant needs to be actively carrying on photosynthesis which is why we tell you not to spray unless the temperature is above 50 degrees and will be for a couple of hours. There's no need to mix the herbicide stronger, follow the label directions just make sure you are putting enough product on for the square footage stated and then be patient to see results! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Time to Quit Pruning

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. For a long time we encouraged pruning during the fall and winter months. The reason being was that we seemed to get far less sap coming out of the pruning cuts. The problem with this is that the plants are going dormant so there can be no active pruning wound healing going on until next spring when the plant starts actively growing again. In theory, the inability of a woody plant to seal off that pruning cut leaves it wide open for diseases to move in and infect the plant. Fortunately we don't have a lot of those diseases around here, BUT, large pruning cuts on trees like Siberian elms, silver maples and hackberries are a common issue. If you have to do some pruning yet this fall for safety or security purposes then certainly do so. But for elective pruning for general shaping, plan to wait until late winter to start. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Mum Care After the Freeze

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Mums can withstand light frosts in the early part of autumn. But once we start to hit temperatures into the low 20s they'll pretty well shut down. They'll hold some color for a while but their season is pretty well done. So what do we do with them? Do we cut them off or let them stand? While mums are pretty winter hardy, having some kind of cover over the crowns of those plants does help. I like to leave all my foliage on my mums through the winter. The old plant catches leaves and snow. It may provide some food for wildlife and even an overwintering location for some insects. If you decide that you want to trim them back only cut down to 2 or 3 inches tall, not flush with the ground. This will help provide a little cover. Applying mulch to help protect the crowns of the plants helps also. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Don't Be Overly Aggressive on the Fall Cleanup

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Gardeners, speaking from personal experience, can be a bit obsessive about cleaning up the yard and garden in the fall. In some cases, especially vegetable gardens, I fully support this obsession. But in much of the rest of the yard and especially in perennial beds, it's sometimes better to just let things go until spring. Many critters, both birds, insects and mammals, make great use of that dying down and dead plant material. Many of these perennials have seeds that the birds will eat. Standing plants will catch leaves and snow that can help temper winter's extreme temperatures. Many butterflies depend on this residue to establish their pupa in. Even the old stems of things like sunflowers, and goldenrod can provide shelter or food. So just go enjoy a football game and leave the cleanup for spring. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Putting the Mower Away for Winter

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. When you put any garden tools away for the winter you want them cleaned up and ready to go come spring.

Well the same thing goes for all your equipment that has a gas motor on it like your lawnmower.

Once you are through with it, clean it up. Blow all the dirt and grass and junk off of it. Change the oil and put on a new air filter and sparkplug. Clean all that nasty gunk off from under the mower deck and get the mower blades sharpened up. If you aren't comfortable doing this, take it to a small engine repair shop. Fuels now days are far more stable but it may not hurt to empty the gas tank or at least add a fuel stabilizer. If you empty the tank, start the engine and run all the fuel out of the carburetor as well. Then the last thing you may want to do is to pull the spark plug and put a shot of oil in the cylinder. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.