

Gardening with Chuck Programs for October 4 - 10, 2021

Wrap Up Grass Seeding Soon

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. As we roll into October we need to wrap up active seeding of turf grasses. Once we roll into mid November we can make dormant season seedings which simply means we plant into ground that's too cool for immediate germination so the seed is waiting there for warmer weather early next spring. In the meantime, we really need to wrap up Kentucky bluegrass seeding now and tall fescue seeding by October 15th. If we plant later than these dates the grasses will still germinate and emerge, but we run a higher risk of losing stands to winter damage. IF you are still seeding you really need to get water on those plantings and get them germinated ASAP. We rarely actually lose new fall seedings to direct freeze damage - we more often lose plants to frost heaving as the new plants don't have an adequate root system. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Preventing Sunscald

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Thin barked trees, like young fruit trees and especially maples but also ashes and oaks, can suffer from sunscald on the south and west parts of the tree from overwinter temperature fluctuations. Warm sunny days warm up the southerly parts of the trunk causing sap to start moving and then overnight low temperatures can cause freezing of that sap and subsequent bursting of the transport vessels. This problem is especially bad in the first year or two after planting. Apply a light colored paper tree wrap, available from garden supply stores, from the ground up to the first branches. Do this in late October or November after the weather has started to cool down. This will insulate the young tree trunk from temperature extremes. Just don't forget to remove this wrapping by March of next spring! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Soil Testing Lawns and Gardens

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. There are many things that we can do in our lawns and gardens right now that are easy to overlook next spring when spring fever is boiling over. One of those things is soil testing. We soil test lawns and gardens to check basic nutrients, primarily phosphorus and also soil pH or the acidity or alkalinity of the soil. These two items are the most frequent cause, along with nitrogen imbalances, of poor plant growth. Our soil pH can vary from fairly acid to fairly alkaline just depending on where you are and how the area has been used. Make a composite sample of 10 to 15 small soil samples from the top 3 inches of lawn or garden, mix it all together and then pull out one pint of soil (about the amount that will fill a one pound butter tub) and bring to the Extension Office. Cost is about \$15. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Plan to Rotate Your Crops

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Farmers rotate their crops to reduce the risk of insect and disease problems and to allow them different opportunities to control weed issues. Gardeners need to do the same thing for the same reasons. Many of our most popular plants can build up disease and insect issues in our garden. Tomatoes have many diseases that can be soil borne or carried over from one year to the next in foliage residue. Squash bugs overwinter in old squash debris in the garden. Moving around where you plant your crops will reduce the build up of many different issues. For tomatoes, really for most garden crops a four year rotation is ideal. For many small gardens that probably isn't practical so at least go for an every other year rotation. Because I can guarantee that year after year in the same place will lead to disaster! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Forcing Bulbs

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. It may be hard to fathom right now, but in 15 weeks we're going to be into January, the holidays will be over and you'll already be sick and tired of cooler weather and no green vegetation. One way that you can put a little color in an otherwise drab winter season is to perform a horticultural technique known as forcing and have spring flowering bulbs blooming in the dead of winter! The thing about forcing bulbs is that you've got to plan ahead, way ahead. Depending on which species of bulb you force it can take anywhere from 5 weeks up to 16 or 18 weeks to start the process and have blooms. If you wait until January to start, You're going to be limited on what you can do. The details are rather specific and entail pots, bulbs, potting soil, cold weather and time. Contact me for details on forcing bulbs. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.