

Gardening with Chuck Programs for September 27 - October 3, 2021

Order Your Garlic Now

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you've never grown garlic but want to try, there is one very important thing you need to know. Treat it like wheat. Plant it in October and harvest it in June. Which means, you need to get your seed garlic ordered now. We don't grow garlic from actual seed though, we buy bulbs, separate the bulbs into individual cloves and plant the cloves. Each clove will develop into a new bulb. There are two general types of garlic, soft neck and hard neck. Soft necks generally have a much longer storage life but hard necks are often considered better flavor. What you don't want to do is go buy something at the grocery store and plant it. It'll likely be California Early. There are much better cultivars to plant. Consider Silver White, Inchelium Red, Music or Chesnok Red and I can recommend sources! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Get Ready to Plant Spring Flowering Bulbs

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The bulbs have been for sale in garden centers for over a month now but we are just now coming into the normal time frame for planting spring flowering bulbs which includes the likes of tulips and daffodils.

The last week of September is the earliest that I want to plant these and prefer to wait into October. Then if you can get some great buys on end of season bulbs, you can even plant into November - they'll just bloom a little later the first spring. It's important to plant them at the depth that is recommended. That'll lengthen the time until you need to dig and reset them. I also like to sprinkle a little bone meal in the bottom of the planting hole and mix into the soil below. It's also far more attractive to plant bulbs in clumps of the same kind rather than spread out in a hit and miss fashion. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Can You Eat Ornamental Sweet Potatoes?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Ornamental sweet potatoes are a commonly grown annual landscape plant now days. The vines are great in pots or landscape beds as they cover the area with attractive and bright foliage. As gardeners clean up in the fall after a frost they will frequently encounter enlarged roots on these ornamentals and wonder if they are edible. Well, just like the ones we grow in the vegetable garden, they are a true sweet potato. So they aren't poisonous. But are they edible? You may just have to try one to find out. Vegetable sweet potatoes are selected for the production and eating qualities of the large fleshy root. Ornamental sweet potatoes are growing for their attractive foliage and aggressive growth. Culinary edibility of fleshy root growths are not one of the considerations; you're own you own. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Storing Sweet Potatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Last week I talked about harvesting sweet potatoes and just wanted to spend a little more time talking about sweet potato storage. While sweet potatoes are a starchy root of a tropical vine they also have high levels of sugar in them, hence the "sweet" part of it. But being a tropical vine they want nothing to do with temperatures below 55 degrees. Period. Storing sweet potatoes, either ones you grew or bought in the store below 55 degrees injures the root, shortens the storage life and gives them an off flavor. I honestly just keep sweet potatoes on my kitchen counter and they'll easily last a month. Even if a few sprouts start to form, just rub them off before cooking. Keeping them away from direct sunlight also helps and the darker the better. But just please, don't put them in the refrigerator! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Keep Mowing Tall

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. As we roll into the cooler months of autumn I am anxiously asked by homeowners if they can start mowing their fescue or bluegrass lawns lower now, which causes me to shake my head wondering how I could have failed so badly. The bottom line is that you can do what you want to. BUT actions have consequences and mowing low has bad consequences in the long run. Leaves are the factory that produces the food that keeps the grass plant growing. The lower you mow it the less food there is available. Mowing a lawn shorter is more likely to expose bare spots in the lawn and bare spots invariably get filled in with weeds. If you want to give your lawn the best chances to stay healthy and productive with a minimal amount of weeds, mow it tall up to and including the last mowing of fall. Your lawn will appreciate it. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.