

## Gardening with Chuck Programs for September 6 - 12, 2021

No Program, Labor Day

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Asparagus and Rhubarb Fall Care

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Asparagus and rhubarb are two of the earliest vegetables we harvest in the spring and come early September it's easy to just forget about them. But you shouldn't. We got those nice rains, but if it dries back out then start watering them until the foliage dries down for winter. It's important to keep that foliage going as long as possible to store up as much food reserves in the crowns that we can. Do not fertilize either of these crops now. Fertilize rhubarb in the early spring, as growth starts, and asparagus AFTER harvest is over. Try to clean up any weeds as well. Asparagus ferns can be removed after they die down or left on the bed to catch snow. If you have grass encroaching in your asparagus planting, remove the ferns after they are brown and spray glyphosate for weed control. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Holiday Cactus Re-blooming

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Christmas and Thanksgiving cactus (yes there is a difference) are popular houseplants. But getting them to bloom on time can often be a challenge. Flowering in the wild is determined by day length and to a lesser extent temperature. If you want to make sure your plants flower on or near the appropriate holiday you need to count backwards 10 weeks from when you want them to bloom. Then go back another 25 days. During that 25 day period the plant must have at least 12 hours of darkness. If the plant is somewhere with only natural light it will reach the 25 day requirement around October 17 naturally. Then bring it inside and let it develop buds. As an alternative you can cover it up with a box or put it in a dark closet each night for at least 12 hours to get the same effect and initiate blooming. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Harvesting Sunflower Seeds

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Sunflowers are a popular plant with many people as well as wildlife. If you happen to have grown one of the confectionary sunflowers Russian Mammoth is a popular one then you can harvest them, roast them and enjoy them. Confectionary sunflowers are usually those with the big striped seeds. The ones we feed the birds are solid black, often called oil sunflowers and trust me, you don't want to roast and eat them! To know when the sunflower head is ripe check the florets in the brown center of the head. They should be shriveled. The heads will often have been tured down and the backside of the head should be a lemon yellow color. Unfortunately the birds will often start getting to the seeds before they are fully ripe so cover the head with a paper sack of cheesecloth and tie it on with a twist tie. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Using Compost

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. You might be surprised at the number of times people call me and ask, "well, I made a compost pile and it's looking pretty good, but what do I do with it now?" Personally, I think the best use of compost is as a soil amendment. Yes, it tends to be nutrient rich and some people will sprinkle it on their flower beds, or put it in the bottom of transplanting holes. Some people use it as potting soil when they start transplants. But like I said, it can't be beat when used as a soil amendment. You can apply it at the rate of roughly one half to one pound per square foot of garden and then till it into the soil. The real value of compost is the organic matter that it holds. Organic matter is just the thing to loosen up clay soils or to help sandy soils better hold nutrients and moisture. Contact me for information on composting. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.