

Gardening with Chuck Programs for August 15 - 21, 2022

Blister Beetles

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I had several phone calls last week from homeowners that had swarms of black bugs, about 1/2 to 3/4 inch long descend onto their tomatoes and just strip the leaves in very short order. These are blister beetles, and they can also be gray and striped tannish in color. These beetles do travel in swarms and there is no predicting when and where they will show up. First a word of warning - the body fluid of these insects can cause watery blisters if it comes in contact with your skin and they are deadly poisonous to horses. If you see them show up in your garden, spray them with a garden insecticide as soon as possible as they can eat a lot of foliage in a hurry! While they can disappear as quickly as they appear, don't risk it. Read and follow insecticide label directions and follow harvest restriction intervals. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Those Aren't Murder Hornets

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. There are currently very large, rather threatening looking, wasps flying around your yards. These are not murder hornets. They are not murder hornets. These are cicada killers. They are solitary species. The female digs a nice little hole in the ground, finds cicadas which she paralyzes with a sting, then gets them back to the nest, pulls them underground and lays an egg on them for food for the young. The female is busy doing all this work and while they have a stinger, they won't bother you unless you pick her up. The males, which have no stingers, will fly back and forth looking for newly emerged females that haven't mated. They will chase other male cicada killers and any thing else that moves. But they have no stinger, they are all bluff. They'll be winding down soon so until then, just ignore them! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Frustrating Tomatoes, Part 1

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Most gardeners have a love hate relationship with their tomato plants. When they are producing well it's all hugs and kisses. When they aren't producing well, it just isn't pretty. One problem that we ran into during July and earlier this month was lots of blooms and no tomatoes. The culprit here was heat. When temperatures routinely are over 90 degrees during the day, and especially staying above 75 at night, pollen tubes in the flower, which move the pollen grain down to the embryonic tomato, literally explode thereby preventing pollination from occurring. Early last week, when it cooled off, I noticed a lot of tomatoes setting on in my garden. Now that it's cooling back down again after last weekends hot snap, I'd suspect that you'll find even more setting on. Give the plants another shot of fertilizer. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Frustrating Tomatoes, Part 2

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Yesterday we talked about tomatoes not setting on in the heat. The other problem that we run into with tomatoes in summertime heat is the tomatoes not changing color or rather not getting fully ripe. The fruit starts to turn a little orange or red or yellow, and then just sits there! The problem, once again is that the higher temperatures, especially above 85 degrees, prevents the production of the compounds that create the color change in tomatoes. As long as we get good cool evenings with temperatures below 75 degrees, the fruit should ripen fine. But things can come to a grinding halt when we have daytime temperatures well over 85 and nighttime temperatures above 75. The good news is that if those fruit are showing any color, you can bring them inside, and they'll ripen just fine with no loss in flavor. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fall Armyworm Redux

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Remember last year when numerous tall fescue lawns around town got hammered by fall armyworms? I told you all not to worry as that was a pest that shows up about once every 7 to 10 years. Yeah..... Fall armyworm adults do not over winter in Kansas and have to move back in from south Texas every year. We have some fall armyworms every year but numbers are usually low enough that it isn't an issue. Well, in late June, large numbers of all armyworm larvae were being observed in the Texas Panhandle and by a few weeks ago there were a lot of fall armyworm moths being captured in traps in southwestern Kansas. The moths are likely now in our area of Kansas. Which doesn't mean a thing, just yet. For now keep an eye on your fescue yards and call me if you see grass start disappearing! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.