

Gardening with Chuck Programs for August 22 - 28, 2022

A Line Trimmer is NOT a Lawnmower

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. One of my pet peeves is when line trimmers, weed eaters if you please, are used as lawn mowers. I see it where there's a small area that a riding lawn mower won't fit and the lawn manager doesn't want to use a push mower, so they use a line trimmer. In general, line trimmers are not used properly. First of all, they do not cleanly cut vegetation like a mower blade. It shreds the leaves and stems. Secondly, there is no mowing height control. So most people put the hub on the ground and away they go. You wind up with a very uneven cut that is often way too short. I recently saw a trimming job where all the vegetation had been taken down to basically ground level. This leaves a lot of bare soil and is an invitation for weed problems. Use these trimmers minimally and be careful of the trimming height! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Stop Fertilizing Woody Ornamentals

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. This is the time of year that we need to stop fertilizing woody ornamentals. Especially things like roses.

Continuing to fertilize after early August can encourage lots of new growth. Growth that may not get hardened off before winter which results in enhanced winter die back. This is often made worse by cooler weather and increasing fall rainfall. Once we hit mid August just shut down the fertilizing of those woody ornamentals. Keep watering them, just don't fertilize anymore. For flowering annuals, whether in pots or in the ground, certainly keep fertilizing them as we are likely still two months out from first frost. I would certainly keep watering everything as it has been dry and may will continue on. If it does stay dry make sure that mums and other perennials are well watered this fall. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Can You Eat Flowering Crabapple Apples?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Flowering crabapples are very popular for their explosion of color in the spring. Some years they will also be loaded with apples and I am periodically asked if these apples are edible. The simple answer is, yes. From a genetics point of view, flowering crabapples are like standard eating apples only instead of being selected for fruit size and quality, they are selected for their blooming capabilities. Crabapples are smaller, sometimes much smaller, than standard culinary apples. We had a crabapple tree in the orchard growing up and that's what mom always made apple butter out of. But before you start picking them by the handfuls remember one thing. These apples were selected for blooms, not flavor. So while they are safe to eat, they may not be very edible, so may be best to leave 'em for the birds! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Are Ornamental Peppers Edible

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I have some beautiful ornamental peppers in my flower bed this summer. They are amazing. But just like the crabapples I was talking about yesterday, I am regularly asked if ornamental peppers are edible. Again, they are not poisonous. You can certainly eat them if you want to. But be forewarned about just a couple of things. First of all, I have no idea what the flavor profile of any of these ornamental peppers is like. They were selected for visual appearance. Period. They may taste okay or they may taste horrible. Secondly, proceed very cautiously as many of these small peppers are loaded with heat. Remember, powerful chili heat often comes in small packages. I would start with very small bites and go from there. Personally, I'm not going to eat any of mine and stick with the ones I know! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Buy Quality Grass Seed

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. One of the more frustrating things that I deal with on homeowner's lawns is when they have a great looking lawn and then they find a plant known as orchardgrass growing in it. The orchardgrass came in WITH the grass seed but the owner didn't know it. They looked at the label and saw 0% weed seed, but they didn't realize that the 2% other crop seed on the label was this annoying weed called orchardgrass. Orchardgrass is used as a pasture grass in the eastern US so they don't have to list it as weed seed. Honestly, for areas close to my house I'd avoid buying K-31 and go with the improved tall fescue blends. But always check that seed label closely. Even ½ of 1% other crop seed is way too much. With a quarter million seeds per pound and 8 lbs per 1,000 sq ft, that's still 10,000 seeds per 1,000 sq ft! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.