

Gardening with Chuck Programs for February 21 - 27, 2022

Water Those Evergreens!

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. In late October I spent about a week and a couple thousand gallons of water soaking down my two blue spruce trees. It may have been too late for one of them as about half the needles started going a grayish cast and then fell off. I'll have to wait until new growth comes in this spring as to whether I keep the tree or not. The point being, I should have watered in September. Because of the continued dry weather, I've been taking advantage of warm days to water the spruces some more. There are actually several species that you may want to consider watering especially if they are prized landscape specimens. Any spruce would be first on the list followed by pines and then by yews. Holly and boxwood should be in this mix too. I wouldn't worry too much about junipers though. All of these need water and soon! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fertilizing Spring Flowering Bulbs

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. For about 150 years we recommended fertilizing spring flowering bulbs after they bloomed. The reasoning was that this was when the plants were moving nutrients back to the bulb for the next year. Then we figured out that by then, the roots have really shut down and started to die. Roots of these tulips, daffodils, and others are most active just as the foliage starts poking through the soil. You can use a balanced fertilizer like a 10-10-10, or similar at the rate of a quarter pound per 10 square feet. You can use just high nitrogen fertilizers like lawn fertilizers that have no weed killers in them but the problem is that you have to cut the rate down so much it's hard to know if you are getting enough on. The important thing is to get those spring flowering bulbs fertilized now, for great blooms next year! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

How Early is Too Early

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. It wouldn't surprise me if someone in the area hasn't already planted some peas or maybe even potatoes.

While I completely understand gardener spring fever, this is still just too early. We need to have fairly consistent soil temperatures of 45 or more before we get too much stuff in the ground. Yes, peas will germinate at 40 degrees, but not very fast. Potatoes start really growing at 45 degrees. Our soil temperatures will jump up to the upper 40s after a few warm days but then following a couple of cloudy days they are back into the 30s. Cold hardy plants like peas and lettuce can be planted about March 15th. Potatoes and cole crops, like cabbage are best held back until about the 25th of March. You can push those dates a little bit, but I wouldn't go all in. Perhaps just a half a row or full row, then wait and see! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Soil Testing Doesn't Tell You Everything

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I will often encourage gardeners to get a soil test of their garden, their lawn, just literally anywhere that we have different types of soil or plants growing. While this is important baseline information, and often points out deficiencies to be corrected, there is much that a soil test won't tell you, that may require some extra investigation if plants aren't thriving. Sunlight or competition from tree roots can actually be diagnosed quite quickly with a site visit. Most garden and flowering plants need 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight every day during the summer. There are exceptions for shade loving plants obviously. Shallow soils or soil issues like compacted soils, heavy clay soils, improper watering can all create issues that won't show up on soil tests. Sure, get a soil test every few years, but that's just the first step! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Asparagus Varieties for Planting

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Mid March to mid April is the time to plant asparagus. Asparagus is a perennial crop that usually needs to be in the ground for a couple of years before you can start harvesting it, but once it starts producing it will be around for decades. To plant asparagus you normally buy one year old crowns, then dig a trench 6 to 8 inches deep with a little mound down the center. You place the crowns 18 to 24 inches apart and cover with about an inch or two of soil. As the plants grow for the next several months you slowly keep adding soil back in until the trench is full. For cultivars consider just about any that have Jersey in the name, like Jersey Giant OR a purple variety called Purple Passion. These are all male hybrids that will product about three times as much as the old Martha or Mary Washington cultivars did. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

