

## Gardening with Chuck Programs for January 10 - 16, 2022

### Fruit Tree Pruning Now?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. It's not even the middle of January, but you can start pruning fruit trees now if you want. You want the temperature above freezing both for your own comfort plus, frozen branches don't cut cleanly and you do more damage. Last Thursday when it only got up to about 10 would not have been a good day to be out pruning! I normally wait until mid to late February for a variety of mainly personal reasons. BUT the sooner you get the trees pruned before those buds swell very much, the less potential damage you'll have to flower buds. As the buds swell they fill with water and that makes it far easier to knock them off as you work through a tree pruning it. Additionally, the sooner you start pruning, you don't feel the pressure to spend 8 hours out there all at once. You can spend a few hours each time out! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Few Birds at Feeders?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you feed backyard birds, then you are in good company. It's estimated that nearly 100 million people feed birds. One question that I receive a lot of in the fall is that people put their bird feeders out and there are few birds. The only problem that I see is impatience! In the fall there are a lot of plants out about the country side with a lot of seed. If you had that problem back in October, November, even early December, I hope you no longer do. Once we move into January and especially after we've had cold weather and snow, feeder activity should be picking up. Snow covers a lot of feeds and birds find it easier to start hitting your bird feeders. Cold weather drives up their energy requirements so they need more fat like suet. If you still aren't seeing very many birds at your feeders, call me and we'll talk about it! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Bird Feed Selection

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I get a lot of questions from homeowners upset because birds keep throwing most of the bird seed in their feeder on the ground. The problem isn't the birds, it's the feed you are putting out to them. Most people have an elevated bird feeder hanging from the eave of their house, a fence post, just anything to get it up at eye level. Most of the birds that will use these feeders prefer high protein oil seeds like sunflower seeds. When you put those cheap blends in them, with a lot of grain, they're just going to throw it out on the ground to get to the sunflower seeds. Cut to the chase and fill it with only black oil sunflower seeds. Yes, a bag may cost more than the same size bag of a blend, but you'll have a lot less waste. As to that feed on the ground, the birds that like those seeds are ground feeders anyway! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Selecting Onion Varieties

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Many gardeners are uninformed on the fact that onions have different maturities, or rather day length sensitivity. When you put onions in the ground they start growing, but the actual bulbing process, that point where they start to really develop a bulb, is dictated by hours of daylight. Short day varieties are intended for areas south of Kansas. We can grow intermediate or long day varieties but will do best with intermediate daylength types. For really big onions you'll need to get plants so you know for sure what you are getting - sets are normally just sold by color! For sweet cultivars try Super Star, Candy or Red Candy Apple. These are all big mild varieties but have a short storage life of just three or four months. For longer storage life, like into or through the winter, try Patterson, Redwing, or Red Zeppelin, I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Pearl Onions

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I was asked the other day how they grow pearl onions, and I was stumped. I had to do some research! If you remember yesterday's program about onion types and daylength sensitive, well pearl onions are a short daylength white onion. That means they only need 10 to 12 hours of daylight and they'll start bulbing. If the plants haven't grown very much before they start bulbing, you wind up with plants that have small bulbs, or pearl onions. To accomplish this they grow these short daylength onions in a long daylength environment like states along the Canadian border. Because they have such long days that far north, the plants don't get very big and they start bulbing. Since the plant is not very big then the bulb will not get very big and voila, you have pearl onions. If you want to try growing them, talk to me first! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.