

Ash Flower Gall Midge

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Ash trees have separate male and female trees. All the seedless ash trees you see are merely male trees. Early in the spring they develop male flower buds, which bloom, release pollen and then dry up and fall off, normally. There is, however, a little insect called the ash flower gall midge, that will sometimes lay their eggs on the male flower buds. The eggs hatch and start feeding in the flowers. A chemical in their saliva causes the flower, which would normally just dry up and fall off, to start growing tissue around the little feeding insect. Ultimately the little larva is safely surrounded by hard corky tissue where it continues to feed in safety until it matures and chews it's way out. While unsightly (it leaves green knots on the ends of small branches), it doesn't hurt the tree and there's really no treatment. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Mosquitoes

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you haven't already noticed, all the recent rains have brought on a bumper crop of mosquitoes. While it is tempting to want to spray for the adults, the success rate for this is low, for many reasons, so we discourage that and focus on personal protection and controlling breeding sites. Use proven insect repellents, following instructions for application and re-application, then washing treated areas as soon as you come in. Mosquitoes can produce a generation in about a week. Any standing water will breed mosquitoes. Empty saucers under plant pots. Make sure gutters drain completely. Change pet water and bird bath water every few days. For areas on your property like swales or ditches that don't drain well, get some mosquito dunks which are an effective biological control and toss them in! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

New Potatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If your potatoes look like mine then there is no wonder why you might be tempted to steal a few new potatoes out for a meal. We normally harvest new potatoes in June when they are about the size of a walnut. We don't dig up the entire plant at first, but carefully pull away soil at the base of the plant. If the potatoes you find are the size of the walnut then you can dig up the rest of the plant. If they aren't big enough then just scrape the soil back into place and wait. New potatoes are very tender and prone to skin slipping. Carefully dig the plants up and let them dry, in the shade for several hours. Sometimes we just leave them on the plant until they dry down. Since these are not mature potatoes they really need to be eaten within a day or two as they simply will not store well. But boy are they some good eating! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Easy on the Tomato Fertilization

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Tomatoes - the eternal bane of the home gardener. We want early tomatoes. We want big tomatoes. We want lots of tomatoes. So we start pouring on the fertilizer and then wind up with a mess. Okay, for general production you are only going to fertilize tomatoes three times after planting them. First application is a week or two before the first tomatoes ripen. The second one two weeks AFTER the first tomato ripens and the third a month after the second. Unless you know you have phosphorus deficiency from a soil test, focus on nitrogen only fertilizers. Calcium nitrate, nitrate of soda and ammonium sulfate are good fertilizers to use, or dried blood meal for an organic N source. Apply 1 to 1½ cups per 30 feet of row sprinkled alongside the plants and then watered in with rainfall or irrigation. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Slime Molds

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. With all this rain I've been waiting for the calls to come in and late last week the first one did. A homeowner found a grayish white powdery substance on his grass. When you mow over it there'll be a big puff of gray dust come out of the lawn mower. This is not a disease but is called slime mold.

Slime molds are primitive life forms. The spores float around in the air, land on a substrate, reproduce and produce more spores, in very short order. They get all their nutrients out of the air and are simply using the grass plants as support. They disappear as quickly as they show up so they are not harmful to the plant, although they may be unsightly. Another form that will show up develops quickly, often on mulch and is called the dog vomit slime mold, which is really all the description you need. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.