

Gardening with Chuck Programs for June 6 - 12, 2022

Little Barley

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. There is a grass known as little barley that started growing last fall in areas of thin grass or no grass. It looked pretty good this spring but now it has produced seed heads and is starting to die. The seeds look like little badminton shuttlecocks with sharp awns pointing away from the tip of the seed. As these seeds mature and dry they can get caught up in socks and clothing or worse yet, in the foot pads of dogs and cats. Because of their design, they are not easy to dislodge and just keep working deeper and deeper in and can cause some real health issues. The plant is dying now so there's nothing that you can do short of burning the areas of the lawn where they are. Making a lawn thicker will reduce the issue. You may have to use a weed preventer that has barley on the label and apply it in late summer. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Walnut Wilt

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. There is a condition in plant growth that we call allelopathy. It's a situation where one growing plant can hinder, or even prevent, another plant from growing. Black walnuts, as well as pecans, butternuts and Persian walnuts, all produce a compound known as juglone which they release into the soil. Of biggest concern with walnuts is how sensitive tomatoes and potatoes are to juglone. Tomatoes planted near a black walnut are liable to just up and suddenly die in the early summer. It is just good practice not to have any black walnut or pecan trees near a garden. For this same reason we do not recommend using walnut leaves as plant mulch or walnut sawdust or walnut shavings. These products should not be put in the soil or the compost bin. Black walnuts are truly great trees, just not near to the garden! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Leaf Scorch

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Just about every summer someone brings leaves to the office that they are afraid are diseased. The leaves show a browning starting at the edges of the leaf and sometimes at the space in between the veins. Many times this is not a disease, but a physiological condition known as scorch. Scorch appears most commonly during hot, windy conditions and low relative humidity. The leaf is losing water faster than the plant can supply it so the leaves essentially dry out and then "scorch". Don't confuse this with wilting due to lack of soil moisture. You can have perfect soil moisture conditions but the plant just can't move the water internally fast enough. Maples, especially red maples and some sugar maples are perhaps the worst, but it can occur with almost any species. Keeping plants watered and using mulch can help. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Thinning Fruit

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you have home fruit trees, it's time to get out and start to check them over to see if you need to thin the fruit. A fruit tree can set way more fruit than you want to have on it. You see, a fruit tree has the capacity to produce a certain amount of fruit, by weight. If you have 1,000 apples set on they are likely to be small. But if you thin it down to just a couple hundred you are likely to have the same pounds of fruit, but each one will be much larger. Thinning excess fruit can also help avoid no fruit crop following a heavy fruit crop. The best way to know if you need to thin is to judge distance between fruit. You want 1 apple or pear per 6 to 8 inches of branch length and the same for peaches. Measure the length of a limb and divide by 7 to see how many you should have. If there's too many, thin them down. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Sedges

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. There is a group of plants known as sedges. They sort of look like grasses, but they aren't. They may be lighter or darker green and are going to be very visible in yards right now. Sedges have three sided stems, you can really feel it in your fingers and they have little vegetative structures attached to their roots called nutlets - hence one of the names of nutsedge. If you try to pull them up, the nutlets often stay behind and grow into new plants. There are several good herbicides to use on sedges, look for one that has sedge or nutsedge on the label. The key for getting good control is to use a couple of treatments and it's quite important that the first treatment be done prior to June 21st. If not, as the days start to shorten after the summer solstice, the daughters bulbs may be triggered to start growing after treatment. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.