

Onion Cultivar Selections

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you want to grow big onions, I mean nice big onions, you need to get onion plants and you need to get those that are intermediate-day length varieties. Long-day length varieties will also work well in our area but they will mature later in the season. Some intermediate-day length varieties that I've had good luck with are Candy, a yellow, Red Candy Apple, a red, and Super Star, a white. NOTE that all three of these are sweet types and as such have rather short storage lives, about 2 to 3 months. This is the case with virtually all sweet onion types. They all have excellent flavor however. For longer storage lives consider a long-day variety like Blush, Red Zeppelin, Red Wing or Patterson. These all have 5 month or longer storage life with Patterson topping them all at 10 to 12 months under good storage conditions. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Plant Strawberries Now

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Early in the season, up through about mid April, is the ideal time to set out new strawberry plants.

Strawberries prefer weather on the slightly cool side so setting those mother plants out now they have a good opportunity to develop a great root system so they can start to send out daughter plants. We don't harvest strawberries the year of planting, in fact we encourage removal of any blossoms so that the mother plants will put all their energy into creating daughter plants on runners that will then be the source of next year's strawberry crop. Then work to keep the bed productive by encouraging existing plants to produce a lot of daughter plants each year. Plant them 18 to 24" apart in rows 12 to 18 inches apart. Lightly fertilize at planting time and then again in late July. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fruit Tree Sprays

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Generally the only fruit tree spray we need to apply before they bloom is peach leaf curl control on peach trees. If you didn't get it on you'd better hurry up because it may be almost too late. After that you can sort of sit back. To be right honest, about the only thing I worry about with fruit trees is codling moth in apples and leaf diseases on apples. All the other species have so few issues that if something arises during the year, we note it and spray for it the following year. But codling moth are present every year and are the little wormy pest that we find in our apples. Once the very first leaf buds open spray susceptible apple trees with immunox, fungi-max or F-stop. Once the petals have all dropped add an insecticide to the plan. After June 1, drop the fungicide. Spray every 10 to 14 days until about mid August. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

pH of Compost

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Soil chemistry is a mystery to far too many gardeners. Soil chemistry covers things like nutrient levels and soil pH. It's a mystery to many gardeners yet it's so very crucial to good plant growth. Soil pH is a measure of if the soil is neutral, pH 7, acid, less than pH 7, or alkaline, over pH 7. Most garden plants will grow best with slightly acid soils. Unfortunately, our native soils here are commonly neutral to slightly alkaline, especially if you are on the uplands. So we start adding compost or yard debris and leaves and assume it's going to acidify the soil. In reality, most of those materials, with the exception of composted bark mulch, are actually alkaline. What I encourage gardeners to do every 2 to 3 years is to bring a soil sample in to the extension office for analysis so we know where our soils are! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Crank Up the Gardening Fever

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. April is upon us and that starts the cranking up of the gardening fever and gardening activities! It's too early for those warm season crops like beans, vine crops, peppers and especially tomatoes, but there's a whole host of other things we can still get planted in the first ten days of April. If you tilled your garden last fall, then you are likely ready to plant if the soil surface is dry. If you did not till last fall then make sure that the soil has dried enough that you don't make a cloddy mess! Okay, here's the list of what you can be planting in early April: beets, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, potatoes, radishes, onion sets or plants, peas, spinach and turnips. Clearly, things like cabbage broccoli and cauliflower are transplants but all the rest are going to be direct seeded or plant parts for onions and potatoes. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.