

Gardening with Chuck Programs for May 9 - 15, 2022

Soil Temperatures An Issue This Year

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We've had a soil temperature issue this year. It has been a little bit slower to warm up than usual. If you put your tomatoes in the ground before this immediately past weekend, they may be looking just a little bit sad right now. However, warmer temperatures have arrived and the soil temperature is going to be cranking back up now so get ready. And with some of those rains you've probably noticed weeds really coming along too. I would plan to get any peppers or tomatoes transplanted now if you haven't already. As the soil dries down I would also get my ridge mounded up for sweet potatoes. If you have potatoes, start getting those hilled up. They will only produce potatoes along the stem ABOVE the seed potato piece which is why we hill them up, - consider mulching to keep them cooler! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Straw Bale Gardening

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Bale gardening started to become popular a few years ago as did five gallon bucket gardening. Both can work and work well for folks, but you just can't plop a fresh straw bale down and plant into it and you can't just fill a bucket up with garden soil and plant in it. It takes a little more planning and preparation than that. Straw bales require conditioning and plans for routine watering and fertilizing. We have a good bulletin from Washington State that you should pick up if you want to give it a try. If you want to do some bucket gardening, a couple of things to remember. Drill some small holes in the bottom of the bucket for drainage. Use a good soil less potting mix or you'll have a bucket of concrete. Buckets will need to be watered and fertilized regularly so just know it takes a little extra time! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Eastern Tent Caterpillar

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Probably as a factor of the cool weather during April, I've seen very few Eastern Tent Caterpillars this spring.

We have many moth species that create large masses of webbing in tree and Eastern Tent

Caterpillar is the earliest one in the season. They are also unique in that instead of making their webby masses on the ends of branches, they put them in the crotch of the tree or shrub. What

I've noticed about Eastern Tent Caterpillars is that while they can be very noticeable, the damage they do is pretty insignificant. While I have occasionally seen them in my apple trees I see them

more often in wild plum thickets. They can eat quite a few leaves, early in the season which may impact fruit production. If you see them, they are easily controlled with garden insecticides, but I

usually just ignore them! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Ants and Peonies

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Even in spite of the seemingly cool and cloudy weather, my peonies are coming on strong now. A lot of times people will notice lots of ants on peony buds but then when peonies don't bloom they don't see the ants and assume that the ants are required to make the peonies bloom. Not the case at all. The ants are there because the buds exude a sweet sappy substance that the ants harvest. If peonies aren't blooming it comes down to them being too deep in the ground or not getting enough sunlight. Peonies really need full sun to bloom. Over time the peony crowns seem to slowly get covered deeper and deeper with soil and if the buds on the crown get more than 2 inches deep, they will not bloom. In the fall try to rake off enough soil to help but you may need to dig and reset them to solve the problem. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Cucumber Beetles and Bacterial Wilt

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you grow cucumbers or muskmelon you have probably had some years when vines will just turn brown and die in a matter of days. This is caused by a disease known as bacterial wilt and bacterial wilt is carried by cucumber beetles. The cucumber beetle starts to feed and the bacteria passes from the mouth of the beetle into the sap of the vine. The bacteria multiplies rapidly and eventually just clogs up the system and then we have sudden death. The only way to stop this from happening is to religiously start treating for cucumber beetles before you even see them. Permethrin based insecticides are the best bet. They need to be applied nearly weekly to provide the most protection. Avoid spraying when the bees are most active - late evening is likely the best choice to treat for the beetles. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.