

Early Season Lawn and Lawn Mower Care

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It's been warm, it's been cold, it's gotten warm again, it's cooled off some again. All in all a fairly normal Kansas spring. The grass has really started to green up and with last week's rain it is really going to start growing like crazy. Which I guess means I'm going to have to break down and get the lawn mower ready to go. Some people have already mowed their lawn, some more than once, while most of the rest of us are stalling as long as possible. If you didn't clean up your lawn mower, especially the underside, and sharpen the blade last fall before you put it away, then you need to do it now before you start for the season. Getting all of that old dried up grass clippings out from under the lawn mower is a good way to help it work most effectively. Lawn mower blades should be sharpened after every ten hours of use. Grass leaves dull mower blades quickly. Mowing with a dull blade results in grass leaves being shredded, not cut cleanly. A shredded grass leaf will then create a large dead area from desiccation and it can result in a lawn that looks like it has little white caps all over it. A sharp blade gives a clean cut that does not have excessive desiccation. The other early season issue or decision that many homeowners have to deal with is how high to cut the lawn. Many people like to cut the lawn low the first time in the season to get rid of old dead grass. While I can understand that, I don't really like it. BUT if you do drop the mower lower for that first cutting, raise it right back up to full height for the second cutting. Make sure that you set your mower at 3 to 3½ inches. It really doesn't matter what grass species you have, that's a good

height! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Late Season Treatment of flowering weeds

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As I drive around the area I'm seeing lots of pretty flowers in yards and I'm not talking about daffodils, tulips and hyacinths. I'm talking about henbit and dandelions, speedwell and chickweed. These are all weeds that love to grow in thin lawns, and I've got one of those lawns too. Most homeowners don't get too excited about these weeds until now, when they are big and blooming and very obvious. Unfortunately, that is the hardest time to try to kill them. Also, we have to remember that those broadleaf weed killers that we'll be using can also cause damage to ornamental plants with tender young foliage as well as young garden plants. Fall treatment and by fall I'm talking the last half of October, is going to be a far preferable option to waiting until spring when they are blooming. Bigger plants are harder to kill and even if you do kill them, if they are blooming when you treat them, they will still produce seed as they die. It's important that you use a herbicide that is labeled for lawns and the weeds that you are trying to kill. Fortunately, most of the lawn weed killers on the store shelves are fairly broad spectrum. The next step is to apply the herbicide properly. If the concentrate says to mix 2 ounces in 1 gallon to spray 500 square feet, do just what it says! Don't try to treat 1,000 square feet because the amount you apply to each weed will be insufficient for control. The leaves will distort, the stems will curl and it'll keep right on growing. When treating for any pest remember TCF - timing, coverage and frequency. The right amount at the right time!

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It's too early for many garden plants!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We all are anxious for spring to get here and to stay. We've had little sneak previews of it and spring fever is running rampant. But it's still just the middle of April. Temperatures have generally been running below normal. The ground is cold and every time it starts to warm up, it seems to cool back off again. To put it very simply, it is still too cold for warm weather garden crops like tomatoes. We've just cleared the average last frost date and for the next couple of weeks, we're still at serious risk of frosty weather. The ground is warming up, but slowly. So all of you that want to put out tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, sweet potatoes, you need to wait until Mother's Day. Just be patient! With the ground being as cold as it is, even if you keep frost off these tender plants, the roots will go into cold shock which has a whole cornucopia of potential issues there. But it is mid April and we have a lot of other things that can be planted in our gardens, if your garden soil is dry enough - I always have to add that! Collards and swiss chard can be planted now along with lettuce, spinach, beets and turnips. If you hurry you can still plant potatoes and peas, and there's also still time for onions, either sets or plants, as well radish and carrots. In about another week it'd be okay, barring anymore cold weather to start planting your melons, from seed, but for your other cucurbit vine crops, including cucumbers and squash or for putting out melons from transplants, wait until May 1st. For things like beans, okra, sweet corn and the aforementioned tomatoes, hold off until Mother's day. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.