

Weather Challenges

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. What a spring, or at least what a month of April. Decent rainfall, but snow flurries on April 18th? Really?? Right in that same time frame we were setting records for the lowest daily highs. Not the kind of records you want to be setting, for sure. Then so many of the ornamentals have been holding tight like it was the first of March, not the end of April. So, what does that mean for the home gardener? Well, first of all be aware that it is warming up, slowly and when we get several days of 60 or 70 degree sunny highs in a row, lookout because it will be instant spring! We may not know for several more days yet, but I'm hoping apples and pears were not damaged by the frost, peaches are maybe, apricots had already bloomed so they may be toast. Surprisingly, most fruit species, even in full bloom, don't start to see damage until about 28 degrees, and it takes a couple hours of 25 degree cold, or colder to start causing 90% fruit kill. If you really have to know, pull off some blossoms and slice them in half with a very sharp knife or a single edge razor blade. If the center is greenish white to cream color it should be okay. If it is dark brown or black, it's dead. Or just wait to see what does or doesn't develop for fruit. Crabgrass is delayed in germinating so if you didn't get your crabgrass preventer on yet, do it NOW. Even though it's been cool, I'd be hesitant to plant fescue or bluegrass seed simply because we have too great a chance of hot dry weather in late May that'll hurt the seedlings. And just because somebody wants to know, it is still too early for tomatoes. Hold off until Mother's Day and if it hasn't gotten much warmer by then, wait even longer! This

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Unwanted Fruit on Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. One of the challenges that homeowners have is dealing with the unwanted fruit or seeds, of certain landscape or ornamental trees. It seems like many people want the pretty blossoms of flowering crabs, ornamental pears, etc. but they don't want the fruit that can come with it. Sometimes, a hard freeze at the right time will take care of this for us, but in recent years that hasn't been the case and we've been blessed with lots of little fruit falling off the trees and creating one heck of a mess. Then there's the elm trees, maple trees and sweet gum trees that either make a whole lot of seeds to plug gutters or grow in our flower beds and gardens or create a real problem in our yards. So is there a good, reliable birth control for these trees? In short, no, not really. For the flowering crabapple trees and possibly the ornamental pears, since they are related, there is liquid sevin. Liquid sevin, at the rate of 2 tablespoons per gallon, sprayed just after the blossoms have fallen off a tree, can greatly reduce fruit set, at least in apple varieties. It may take two treatments about ten days apart to get them all. There is also another product sold under the brand name Florel, that is labeled to reduce or eliminate undesirable fruit development on many species including, cottonwood, elm, ornamental pear, maple, oak, pine sweetgum and sycamore. This product needs to be applied at full bloom, unlike the post bloom of liquid sevin, and it's control has been somewhat erratic in tests. Like the sevin, you have to have good thorough coverage for good results. But it may be worth a try, call me! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Is There Still Time To.....?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With spring running so late, I've been getting a lot of phone calls from gardeners and homeowners wanting to know if there is still time to do a whole host of things that got postponed. So in no particular order, here we go. Is there still time to apply crabgrass preventer? Yes. The ground has been so cold that crabgrass has not yet started to germinate. But some of these products need a week or two to really get activated so apply as soon as possible and water it in. You may want to make sure that you are using a product with Dimension though, as it does have a little reach back and can kill small crabgrass that had already started to germinate. But water it in if it doesn't rain to get it activated. Is there still time to plant potatoes? Yes, but hurry. If it turns off hot in May it will take a toll on them. Is there still time to plant tomatoes? Okay, trick question as it's still too early to plant tomatoes. If you had already planted them, they are probably looking pretty sick about now! Is there still time to treat for spring flowering weeds in lawns. Yes, but be careful with drift and realize that you need to come back in late October and spray then to get the jump on next year. Can I still plant grass seed? If you are willing to water the heck out of it if it turns off hot and dry, then yes. If not, then don't plant until September. The risk is that if it turns off hot and dry real soon, in May or even early June, the grass plants won't have had a chance to develop a good strong root system and they'll get blasted by the heat. So, with the exception of planting grass seed, hurry up while there's still time! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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