

## Gardening With Chuck for April 29 - May 5, 2013

### 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. It was bad enough that we had snow flurries on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April. But then to have 2 to 3 inches of snow on the 23<sup>rd</sup>? I'm not even going to ask what might happen next or even begin to suppose it can't get crazier. What I will say is that we are on pace to have the second coldest April since the late 1940s. Actually, snow in April while not seen much in recent years, is not all that uncommon. And yes, there has even been snow in May, although the last time that we had that was over 100 years ago, so I really hope we don't beat that record. Snow in late April and temperatures down into the mid 20s does raise a lot of questions however. Some homeowners are going to want to know if they will still have fruit. Temperatures were cold enough to kill young fruit and blossoms in full bud. The challenge is that temperatures can vary widely from the outside of a fruit tree to the inside and from the bottom most blossoms to the top most blossoms. Only time will tell if the fruit survived or not. IF you had blossom buds still holding fairly tight, they probably survived just fine. However, don't be surprised if fruit looks like it's starting to form and then falls off after a few weeks. This is common and usually an indication that there was poor fertilization or the embryonic seeds were killed. There will likely be some frost burn of tender young foliage on garden plants. Assuming that these are in crops that can handle cold weather they should grow out of it. If it is on things like beans or tomatoes, very much blackened vegetation probably indicates a dead plant and a need to start over. Which is what we've been trying to tell you for quite some time

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

## Growing Blueberries in Kansas

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If I could do one thing in the horticultural world, I would ban the sale of blueberries in Kansas. It isn't that I don't like blueberries, the fact is that I love blueberries. The problem is that Kansas conditions, at least from here west, don't really like blueberries. Blueberries are not native to Kansas. Most native blueberry ranges in Kansas are east of the Mississippi River and from the Gulf Coast up to Canada depending on the type of blueberry. There are two things working against blueberries around here. First and foremost is the soil. Blueberries like well drained soils of very high organic matter that are quite acid. Our soils are poorly drained, low in organic matter and generally alkaline. We can change soil conditions to be conducive to blueberry growth, but you honestly need to start on that this year so that you can plant next year. But the second problem that we run into is hot dry weather. By dry I'm referring as much to relative humidity as I am to rainfall. Last year was a classic blast furnace summer with high temperatures and low humidity. When we have those conditions, blueberry plants and leaves will scorch and suffer. For the amount of time and money that you are going to put into growing blueberries, you can buy a lot of blueberries every year. But if you are convinced that you HAVE to grow blueberries, then come and visit me for the inside tips of what you have to do and then start doing the ground preparation now for planting next year. You'll need to add organic matter and sulfur to improve drainage and lower the pH and that takes time!

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## Controlling Bindweed

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When the Mennonites brought Turkey Red Wheat to Kansas from the Caucasus region of Asia in 1874, there was another little "present" hiding in those bags of seed. It was the seed of a plant that grew through the Caucasus regions and was well suited to the same kind of growing conditions as wheat. It was a plant with a vine and a pretty white flower that we now call Field Bindweed. We have been blessed with bindweed ever since. Bindweed is a perennial weed that is deeply rooted, tough and can be a real threat in gardens, flower beds and even lawns. There are some very powerful herbicides that can control bindweed, but they also control many other plants we'd like to have in our garden or landscapes. So we try to find slightly less scorched earth approaches. In lawns, regular treatment with dandelion killers will control it after a couple of years. You can also control it through cultivation, but it requires pulling or hoeing it off at regular intervals. You basically pull it up when the new vines have 4 or 5 leaves. Once it gets to six leaves it starts putting food back into the roots. So by removing the vines before that time you keep using up food reserves and the plant eventually dies. Figure 3 to 5 years with this approach. In ornamental beds and gardens the best approach is probably to move the vine, at least one foot long, away from all desirable vegetation and spray with a glyphosate product like Roundup or Kleenup. Be very careful not to get these herbicides on desirable plants as they'll kill everything. Plan on one to two years of this treatment. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.