

Grass Seed Quality Does Make a Difference

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I'm guessing that we are going to once again see a lot of grass seed planted in the next month. Sadly, a lot of it will not be planted correctly, or worse yet, the wrong kinds of grass will be planted or very poor quality grass seed will be planted which pretty well guarantees that the homeowner will not be happy with the results. The type of grass to be planted in lawns during September is quite easy, either Tall Fescue or Kentucky Bluegrass. Warm season grasses like bermuda, buffalo or zoysia are planted in May, not September. Other cool season grasses, like ryegrass or other types of fescue like creeping red, simply aren't well adapted to Kansas weather, especially hot dry summers. So look at the tag that is on every bag of grass seed and make sure that it only contains named tall fescue varieties or named Kentucky Bluegrass varieties. The other thing you want to look for on that tag is a simple little thing called other crop seed. No seed can be sold with noxious weed seed in it so don't think you're getting a deal because it says 0% noxious weed seed. And any other weed seeds that happen to be in it can be taken care of fairly easily. But other crop seed usually means another grass species like orchard grass. Orchard grass is a coarse and undesirable grass in your yard. Once it's there the only way to get rid of it is to dig it up or spray with roundup and then reseed. Orchard grass is a common contaminant in low price seed like K-31 tall fescue. Now, if you're planting it in a pasture, that's not a big issue, but you really don't want orchard grass in your lawn! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Late summer gardening

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As we quickly move up on Labor Day, some gardeners are in the middle of heavy harvesting, others are ready to spray the entire garden with Roundup and call it a year and a few are gearing up for their last round of fall garden planting! The rainy period has really changed things since mid-summer. In some gardens, weeds may be coming on like crazy prompting the desire to spray everything and be done with it. If your garden is winding up and you're ready to pack it in, then please don't just walk away from it. Go ahead and spray it with glyphosate if you want to, but pull up the crop plants, especially the tomato vines and toss them into the burn barrel, burn pile or the trash. Too many diseases overwinter on the tomatoes to even put them in the compost pile. Everything else can be composted or plowed under. I really like to till the garden under, later in the fall, when it's a bit drier of course. Fall tillage allows an earlier gardening start next spring allows this year's left overs to start to decompose and helps destroy eggs that were laid in the soil by insect pests like grasshoppers. Now, for those who aren't quite ready to quit gardening yet, we can still be planting. From now clear up to the middle of September you can be planting lettuce, radish, spinach and turnips. These are all fairly short season cool loving crops that have a fair amount of frost tolerance. In fact the fall harvest of these vegetables can often give you better quality produce than from the spring planting. If you wanted to you could plant one round now, wait two weeks and plant another! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Leaf Spots 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. It's always fascinating, well, to me anyway, how plants react to the weather. Last year we saw a great deal of stress in trees due to the heat and drought - remember, heat stress and drought stress are two different things. Also keep in mind that accumulated stress, over a couple of growing seasons, like we saw, can continue to impact trees for several years afterwards. This year we've seen a little bit of the drought stress, early on in the growing season and then we had over a foot of rain in about 4 weeks. Too much moisture can cause as many problems as not enough. Both extremes can cause trees to lose root mass. What I am seeing more of in recent weeks though, are leaf spots on trees. There are many tree leaf diseases constantly floating around out in the environment. But until you have the right combination of plant susceptibility at the time that the disease can infect the leaf and then the right weather for the infection, the disease won't show up. With a month of rain we have seen a lot of late season infection of tree leaves with leaf spot organisms. Right now I'm seeing many green ash trees getting hit hard with mycosphaerella leaf spot. I'm seeing many other minor leaf spots on other species. We can't cure leaf spot diseases, we can only prevent them so once you see the spots it's too late to do anything. Don't waste your time spraying. The other thing to keep in mind is that defoliation this late in the growing season isn't really much of a concern. The tree has already stored up root reserves so it's ready for winter. It may look bad, but don't worry about it! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.