

Tomatoes (BER, Stink Bugs, Leaf Blight)

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I haven't talked about tomatoes for a while so I probably should! Blossom end rot, that physiological condition that causes tomato fruits to rot from the bottom side in should be slowing down and going away given the rain, cooler weather and maturity of the plants. I was judging at an area fair last week and had lots of tomatoes come in with little hard white spots under the skin. These are the results of stink bug feeding from quite some time ago. When the stink bug feeds, they pierce the skin just like a mosquito feeding on us. They suck out juice and then leave. The tomato reacts with the white callous tissue formation under the skin. While it is unsightly it is still perfectly safe to eat. If there are a lot of the spots it may make the tomato hard to peel but that's all. Stink bugs are easy to kill with most any garden insecticide but you have to get the spray right on them before they feed. Stink bug damage normally decreases through the season but they can be a pain otherwise. The rains and wind and humidity and cooler temperatures have also helped to reduce the spider mite pressure which is the best thing we could have hoped for, but leaf blights on tomatoes are continuing. Treat with chlorothalonil or mancozeb are about the only products labeled for septoria leaf blight on tomatoes. The key is spraying about once a week and then being sure to treat both upper and lower leaf surfaces. This can be a real pain in very large and mature plantings - especially if the tomatoes are a little crowded. Try to rotate your tomato spot each year and clean up all debris at year's end. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Mushrooms

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With the recent rains I've been waiting. I saw my first ones a little over a week ago and had my first phone calls not too long afterwards. When we have good rainfall in late July and August we will see mushrooms jumping up everywhere. It doesn't take long after a rain for mushrooms to show themselves. They may be small, they may be big but they will show up. Mushrooms, or toadstools, are the fruiting body of decay fungus organisms. They are to the fungus organism what an apple is to an apple tree, they produce the seed for reproduction. People often want to know how to get them out of their yard. Well, basically there is nothing that you can do! The main body of the fungus is living well below the soil surface. The fungus feeds on organic matter, breaking it down into its base elements allowing it to recycle the nutrients for new plant growth. In pasture settings the fungus is often using masses of old dead grass roots as the food source. In lawns the fungus is often feeding on tree roots from a tree long gone from the yard. Sometimes these roots can be a foot or two below the soil surface. In some cases the fungus will form a ring that expands in size every year. This can result in a neat circle of mushrooms called a fairy ring. It often also creates a dark green circle of grass just inside the circle of mushrooms. This dark green grass is caused by the release of nutrients by the fungus after it has broken down the organic matter to plant usable nutrients. Fertilizer can mask the dark green circle, but there's no way to get rid of the mushrooms. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Start planning for lawn renovations

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With August upon us it is time to think about lawn renovation or rescue, depending on how you look at it. With the recent rains and a cooler summer than last year it gives us hope that we may have a decent fall for grass seeding. The ideal time to seed tall fescue and bluegrass is early September. By planting around September 1st it gives us two good months to get the new grass plants established before winter shuts everything down. If you want to do some overseeding or total reseeding though, you need to start getting the location prepared now. If you have bermudagrass you need to spray it twice with glyphosate to get all the Bermudagrass killed. Let the bermudagrass have several days of growth, spray with glyphosate, wait 2 weeks and treat again. If all you have is a weed patch, this same treatment works great to clean everything up. Once everything is good and dead, mow it as low as you can. If the seed bed is pretty smooth, you can plant right into the existing dead vegetation with a power seeder. These work great and minimize the backbreaking job of tilling everything up. You need to use either a tall fescue or Kentucky Bluegrass. Ryegrass, creeping red fescue or any other of those fast grow grasses will look good for a few months, but our hot Kansas summers can really toast them into oblivion in a hurry. There are literally hundreds of improved tall fescue varieties and virtually any of them are better than the old K-31 tall fescue. But K-31 still has a place in some situations. Then remember always mow tall - 3 plus inches. Short mowing kills lawns! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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