

## Gardening With Chuck for February 11 - 17, 2013

How early can I start gardening?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Once we hit Valentine's Day, really hard core gardeners are getting really itchy to start gardening. I'm not talking about starting plants inside for later transplanting, I'm talking real gardening, outside, in the dirt! Well, I'm just going to tell you that February is just a little bit on the early side, so try to curb your horses. We have a whole host of cool weather garden crops that we can be planting by mid to late March with few concerns. That list includes the likes of peas, turnips, lettuce, radishes, potatoes and most of your cabbage relatives. In our part of Kansas, we can start planting all of these right around St. Patrick's Day and expect success 80 to 90% of the time. Now, of the plants on this list, radishes and peas may be the most cold hardy and there are years, like last year, that you can certainly plant these in February with some success. There are caveats to that however. First of all, you needed to have your garden worked up and ready to plant last fall. We may have had just enough precipitation in January to make it a little too wet to try to till it just yet. Secondly, be aware that pushing the season by a full month CAN lead to failure. If we get into a bunch of cloudy cool days, the soil just won't warm up and the seed will rot. You can improve your chance of success with early gardens by using floating row covers. This gauzy like fabric is anchored to the ground so it doesn't blow everywhere. It helps hold in warmth of the day into the night thereby helping to warm the soil and it protects young plants from hard frosts. Call me for more information on this! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Dormant Oil Spray vs Dormant Fungicide Sprays

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 most confusing things for home fruit tree growers that I have run into is the concept of dormant fungicide treatments. The problem is, that most home orchardists would go to the hardware store or garden center, and say that they needed a dormant fungicide. Some well meaning but totally clueless clerk would start looking on the shelf and see something labeled dormant oil and sell that to the homeowner. The problem is that dormant oil is not a fungicide. It's an insecticide, specifically a product used to treat scale insects. Scale insects are not common. They can become a problem on virtually any fruit tree and when you get them, we control them with dormant oil applications in the late winter. But don't waste your time and effort spraying with a dormant oil UNLESS you know that you have a scale problem. Now, about the only thing that you'd be spraying a dormant fungicide on is peaches and possibly plums. Dormant oil is not a fungicide and won't help you with peach leaf curl or plum pocket. These diseases are likely just about every year. Peach leaf curl attacks the leaves, plum pocket the fruit. Plums rarely have fruit, but peach trees have peach leaves every year. So you would need to treat your peaches and your plum trees with a dormant fungicide now. Not a dormant oil, but a fungicide, specifically chlorothalonil, Bordeaux mix or liquid lime and sulfur. The last two will be sold as Bordeaux or lime and sulfur. Chlorothalonil is marketed under many different names so you just have to read the label to see if it's in there and if it's labeled for peaches. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Is your fruit tree lonely?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Even though I'm usually quite pessimistic about the chance of getting a tree fruit crop in any given year, I'm also a firm believer in doing everything right, so that the one year in five that everything clicks, you've got the best chance possible to have a high quality fruit crop. Homeowners make lots of mistakes when it comes to home fruit orchards but one is in not recognizing the needs of some species of fruit, or some specific varieties, to be cross pollinated. Some trees, like golden delicious apple, are self pollinating. Even those though, will often benefit from having a second tree around. But when we talk about needing to be cross pollinated, we are talking about the need for those trees to be pollinated by a different variety of the same species. In most cases an apple like Red Delicious can be fertilized by almost any other apple cultivar. However, a variety like Winesap is pollen sterile and while being able to be fertilized by almost any other species, it can not fertilize any apple tree. I recommend always planting at least two varieties, unless one is Winesap, and then plant 3 varieties. Even if a variety is self fruitful, it doesn't hurt to give it company! Pie or tart cherries are self fruitful as are most peaches. Sweet cherries need a pollinator, but they very rarely bear fruit in our part of Kansas, so I just wouldn't plant them. Pears are much like apples and you should always plant two varieties. When buying fruit trees, check the tag for variety and cross pollination requirements. If you aren't sure, write down the names and give me a call!

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