

## Strawberries

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Of all the different fruit species that we can grow or try to grow in Kansas, strawberries may be our most reliable. Even a small bed, say 10 by 10 feet, can provide a lot of strawberries. We have a great bulletin on strawberries and I would recommend stopping by and picking one up if you are new to strawberry growing. With strawberries we have everbearing and June bearing. June bearing bear heavily in June and then virtually nothing the rest of the year. Everbearing keep giving a few berries throughout the summer. June bearing will give you larger crops and are honestly much easier to manage so I encourage planting June bearing varieties. For varieties, I would recommend Earliglow, Red Chief or Jewel. All have good flavor and vigorous growth. If you want to try an everbearing, go with Tribute or Tristar. Mid March to early April is when you want to plant strawberries. Plant into a weed free seed bed that you have worked up and fertilized with 1 pound of 10-10-10 or similar fertilizer per 100 square feet. You want to make sure that the crown is even with the soil surface. We usually recommend having rows 36 to 48 inches apart and then setting plants 18 inches apart within the row. The plants will grow runners and develop daughter plants which will then bear fruit the following year. You want to pick off flowers the first year so that the plants will get well established with big root systems and lots of daughter plants. You sacrifice some fruit the first year, but the rewards starting in year 2 will make it all very worthwhile! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Planning Your Fruit Orchard

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I grew up on a farm with a large fruit orchard. I know that few things in life are better than fruit picked fully ripe and fresh off the tree. But Kansas weather is fickle, and fruit production in any one year is hit and miss. There are some fruit species that are more reliable than others so let's have a quick short course on what to plant and what to maybe avoid. Sweet cherries, like Bings, are simply not well adapted to our area. Pie cherries or tart cherries seem to do very well though and I would recommend Meteor or North Star. Apples and pears seem to be fairly well adapted. Two different varieties of either are generally needed to insure pollination. For apples consider Jonathan, Gala, Empire, Delicious, Golden Delicious, Jonagold and Granny Smith. For good disease resistance try William's Pride, Enterprise, Priscilla and Redfree. For pears, Seckel, Moonglow and Duchess are good. If you want a pear for cooking then go with Moonglow or Duchess. Peaches are very short lived, 10 to 12 years, and subject to late frosts. I don't encourage planting peaches but if you want to try one or two, you only need one, consider Intrepid, Early Redhaven, Redhaven, Harken and Reliance. Apricots are even worse than peaches at getting frosted and I just don't recommend them. One thing to keep in mind, plant your fruit trees in the coolest spot you can find, NOT the south side of the house. You want to plant where the last snow drift melts, but an area that gets good summer sun. You want to keep the plant dormant in late winter. We have a good fruit tree bulletin. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Start the Gardening Season with a clean slate

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. In agriculture we talk about no till farming. Very little soil tillage is done and lots of residue, old crop stubble, is left on the soil surface. That's all well and good in agriculture, not such a good thing in your home vegetable garden or flower bed. You want to clean off as much of the old residue from the vegetable garden as possible or work it into the soil. Tomato vines should be removed and thrown in the trash or burned. Many of our most common vegetable garden and even flower diseases carry over from one year to the next on plant residue. So the first step in having healthy plants is to get rid of last year's plant material. The good thing is that March is a good month to do this. In vegetable gardens pull up the plants that are still there and rake up as much debris as you can. Everything except tomato vines can go in the compost pile, but to be right honest, I'd just as soon throw all that debris in the burn barrel or trash bin and just get it out of there. If your compost pile gets good and hot, like an active compost pile should get, most disease pathogens would be destroyed. But if your compost pile is just kind of limping along, probably not. Then till up the soil and start each year with a clean seed bed. Treat flower beds the same way but in iris and peony beds especially, clear off all of that old growth from last year. I don't like to mow down peonies as that just scatters stuff everywhere. Cut stuff off at the base, rake up everything else and burn it or trash it. Irises need to be cleaned up in late winter and remove all the old dead leaves and even clipping off dead leaves too. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.