

Pillbugs

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The number 1 question from last week, right ahead of little barley, was why do we have a population explosion of roly polys and what can I do about it?! Roly polys, also known as pill bugs, are crustaceans, yes you hear me right - those rascals are related to crawdads and shrimp. Pillbugs have been known to eat the leaves of succulent or semi-succulent plants like hostas, but most of the time they are happily munching away on decaying organic matter like mulch, grass clippings, even old boards. They like the weather to be kind of moderate temperatures and rainy, or at the least cloudy. Because of all the dead vegetation from last year and then the cool conditions in April and May and nice rainfall, we've been having a great little population explosion of these rascals. And as long as it was rainy and cool they were pretty well scattered all over the place. But now it's gotten hotter and it's gotten drier and the pillbugs are heading for cooler wetter locations. Which means that they may be heavily concentrated around around flower pots, flower beds or even trying to come into the house. While they won't do any damage in the house, nobody enjoys the little crunching noise underfoot as you walk across the kitchen floor. Spray the areas outside the house with a general lawn and garden insecticide applying a good thorough soaking spray. Almost anything will work fine. You can also use diatomaceous earth as a barrier treatment as the sharp silicon dioxide crystals will slice them open and cause them to dehydrate - just remember to retreat after rains!

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Tomato Leaf Spot Diseases

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is always the time of year for firsts. The first bagworm, or the first squash bug or the first tomato leaf spot disease, which came into the office the middle of last week. There are actually several different diseases that can cause tomato leaves to turn brown and die, the most common is septoria leaf spot. Now, these are not the diseases that tomatoes have resistance to. These are not the diseases that live in the soil. These are the diseases that overwinter on old leaf material and once the weather starts to warm up and we have heavy dews, lots of rain or sprinkler irrigation, we will see. These are fungus diseases and what we try to do is prevent the disease from getting going as we can not cure the disease once it gets started on the leaf. The first thing is to make sure to get dead leaves, from last year or this year, out of the garden. This is the primary source of infection. Next we want to try to keep the leaves as dry as possible. Stake up plants, plant them far enough apart to ensure good air movement and then water at the base of the plants, don't use a sprinkler! Then finally, plan on using a fungicide about once a week. It is important to spray the tops and the bottoms of the leaves as the disease can infect either leaf surface. Fungicides containing chlorothalonil are best as there is a zero day waiting interval between treatment and harvest. Chlorothalonil is found in several common garden fungicides. You can also use Mancozeb, an old standby fungicide, but you have a five day waiting interval before harvest. Follow the label directions and then spray both sides of the leaves! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Little Barley

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Over the past 20 years I have watched a seemingly insignificant little winter annual grass plant called little barley start to become a real pest. The big problem with it is that the mature seeds have a bunch of backwards pointing awns that causes them to get stuck in clothing, socks especially, as well as pet fur and between the pads of cat's and dog's feet causing great discomfort. Most homeowners don't even know that they have this rascal until it is this time of year and the seeds are getting into everything. Well, you might as well forget about it right now because the plant is dying and there's nothing you can do about it. Even if you sprayed it with roundup, it's dying anyway and it has already made viable seed. Like many weeds it is only a problem where there is bare soil or very little competition so a good thick lawn is the best way to deal with this one. The problem is that after last summer's heat and drought, we have a lot of lawns with a lot of bare soil. In the short term you need to break the cycle of this thing. It germinates in September and October so you need to apply a crabgrass type weed preventer in mid August and then water it in to activate it if we don't get at least one half inch of rain. While most of the crabgrass preventers will probably control it, I've only found one, Dimension, that actually includes it on the label. You could try to treat it with a post emerge product, like the crabgrass killers, but since little barley is a cool season grass, I don't know that they would be effective. Guess I'll have to do some research on that in the future! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

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