

Pruning After the Storm

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. A little over a week ago we had some storms come through the area that did some tree pruning in their own style. I was somewhat stunned that I didn't receive any phone calls last week, but not really disappointed! Following a storm like we had there is a tendency for homeowners to want to go in and do a bunch of pruning. Once you get any broken limbs removed from a tree, the best thing to do for most trees following a wind storm is to do nothing at all. The worst thing that can happen is that the homeowner hires 2 Guys with a Chainsaw and a Truck that wind up topping the trees. For years, topping has been performed by tree trimmers as a quick way to allegedly eliminate future problems. The problem with tree topping is that everything is cut off the tree and you wind up with a trunk and some large branches that have been cut off leaving a stub. The tree, in an effort to live starts sending out all sorts of new shoots or limbs. The problem is that these new shoots are only attached to the bark, not the heartwood of the tree. These new limbs will grow rapidly, get big and because they have no solid attachment to the tree they will start breaking off with future wind storms. Not only that, a topped tree is ugly and you will start to get a lot of decay started in the tree - you've just sentenced the tree to a lingering ugly death. So clean up the broken branches and leave the rest of the tree alone. If you want some trimming done, then hire a certified arborist and make sure that they know that you do NOT want the tree topped, you want it properly pruned! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

End of Planting Season?

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What's Eating My Plants

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. A common complaint that I get this time of year from homeowners has to do with disappearing plants. They were there when I went to bed last night and when I woke up this morning they were gone! There's a lot of things that will eat plants out of yards and gardens and sadly a real shortage of good solutions. Deer are far more common than people realize and can show up almost anywhere in town. Often a little detective work will reveal their hoof prints, especially if they are in a garden spot. Deer have a real affinity for things like roses and other shrubby landscape plants. They seem to go after the biggest buds and flowers and thorns don't seem to slow them down in the least. Rabbits probably do much of the damage and are very adept at eclipsing our attempts to fence them out. They can dig under many fences and go through much smaller openings than people realize, especially small hungry growing bunnies. Squirrels will even go after garden plants and as anyone who's tried to keep them out of a birdfeeder will testify, they are tricky. Raccoons will sometimes start raiding potted plants. Their activity is easy to detect because they make quite a mess. Then there's also things like voles and cutworms. For most of the critters, control will be tricky. Repellents may or may not work, better chance if they are taste based. Smell based repellents tend to get diluted in our Kansas winds. Blood meal sprinkled around plants often works for rabbits and deer. Ultimately, you may find nothing that works and you'll just have to grow some for you and some for the critters. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

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