

High pH soils and what do you do?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It's Thanksgiving week and the last thing many of us are thinking about is gardening. But there's still time to apply treatments to the soil to start correcting soil pH issues. We all know about adding lime to soil to raise an acid pH.

Unfortunately, I have far more garden soil samples come through with high pH, than I do with low pH. If the soils are calcareous then there's not very much that we can easily do. Calcareous soils will have lots of little pieces of limestone present. Another way to test for calcareous soils is to take dry soil and add one drop of vinegar. If you don't hear any fizzing and don't see any obvious fizzing means it isn't calcareous and sulfur applications should help. In these alkaline, non-calcareous soils we can add sulfur and lower the pH. Sulfur, added to and worked into the soil, reacts slowly, essentially creating sulfuric acid. The sulfuric acid produces hydrogen which with free hydrogen in the soil, the pH is lowered. This all happens through microbial activity mainly. We normally figure 2 to 3 years to make a significant difference. The reaction takes place faster in warmer soils and works best with good soil moisture, not too wet or too dry.

Small sulfur particles react quicker but are harder to work with. Most of the time we are stuck with pelleted and flaked sulfur. We need to take a soil test to know how much sulfur you need to add and then after adding it works best to till it into the soil. So the testing, the application and the incorporation we can still get done this year so it's there and ready to go to work next spring!

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Horseradish

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Horseradish is a great plant and every gardener that likes horseradish needs to grow it and process it themselves at least once. You may never want to do it again, but you really need to try it once. We normally dig horseradish after a hard freeze has killed the roots, usually about now. Large roots are harvested to be used while smaller pencil sized roots can be cut into 6 to 8 inch long sections or sets that are immediately re-planted for future crops. Now the fun begins. Wash the roots and remove all the dirt then peel the roots and cut into sections. An interesting thing about horseradish is that the really strong bite develops immediately after processing. Keep in mind that horseradish and the eastern Asian treat known as wasabi are closely related, which should be a good clue to the potency of each. This next step you may want to do outdoors or at least in a garage with the garage door opened up. Use a blender or food processor to chop or grind the roots. Be sure to include a small amount of water and a couple of ice cubes. Vinegar or lemon juice is added right after processing to stop the chemical process that produces the bite of horseradish. Use 2 to 3 tablespoons of vinegar or lemon juice and a half teaspoon of salt per cup of processed horseradish. Add this immediately after processing for a milder flavor or wait up to 3 minutes for stronger flavor. The longer you wait the stronger will be the flavor, but don't wait too long. Oh, because the impact of horseradish is vapor based not tongue based hold the container away from your face when you open it up! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Selecting Christmas Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I ran this last week, but I'm going to run it again because I really want folks to get a good, fresh Christmas tree. For various reasons many homeowners have an artificial Christmas tree. But for the rest of us, nothing beats a green renewable resource known as a real Christmas Tree. Whether it's a pine, a Fraser Fir, a spruce or a cedar tree cut out of the pasture, having a real tree just seems to make Christmas real for a lot of us. The best way to make sure that you have a fresh tree is to go to a Christmas Tree farm and cut your own. If you go to a tree lot you can check freshness in a couple of ways. Pick the tree up and thump the butt end on the ground firmly a couple of times. If very few needles fall off (and a few always will), then take a needle and bend it between your fingers. If it bends easily then you've got a tree that's fairly fresh. If tons of needles fall off or the needles snap between your fingers instead of bending then put the tree back and keep looking. The most important thing to do as soon as you get your Christmas tree home is to cut about a half inch off the bottom and then get it in water as soon as possible. There is a lot of debate about whether various additives to the water actually keep the tree fresher or not. From my experience, the most important you need to do is simply get the tree in water and then check the water regularly. For the first few days check the water 3 or 4 times a day. The first few days it will really take up a lot of water. After a few days this should stabilize and you may only have to add water once or twice a day. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.