

### Poinsettia and Greenery Care

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I talked about poinsettia care a few weeks ago, but many folks have probably already forgotten that and by now they have their poinsettia plant at home. Poinsettias are a bit particular in their care especially when it comes to watering.

Overwater a poinsettia and you'll get root rot started in a heart beat. Let it wilt just once and all the leaves will fall off in a few short days. Make sure you're poinsettia is in a dish and then poke holes through the pretty foil in the bottom so water can drain out. That foil is pretty, but it's a death trap for the poinsettia roots. You need to get excess water out of the bottom of the pot. You will want to check the soil moisture daily by sticking your finger about an inch into the soil. If it is dry down one inch, then water it. Try to use lukewarm water as poinsettias are also picky about temperature. To maximize bloom life, daytime temperatures should be 65 to 75 and nighttime temperatures 60 to 65. Keep your poinsettia away from cold drafts such as doors and don't let the leaves touch windowpanes. But don't get it too warm - avoid hot locations like adjacent to a warm air vent of the furnace or near a fireplace or wood stove. The other thing we have a lot of in holiday homes seems to be natural greenery. Whether it's pine, spruce, fir or juniper, keep in mind that the minute these natural products are cut they start to lose water, dry out and die. More importantly, every day makes these things much more flammable. Keep them away from heat and especially open flames. You may even want to change them out a couple of times during the holidays! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK,

I'm Chuck Otte.

## Firewood Facts

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The topic of firewood always brings a lot of interest, or sometimes argument! All wood has the same amount of heat units, or BTUs per pound. The difference comes in that some species of trees take a lot larger quantity of wood to make a pound. So the amount of BTU in any piece of dry wood comes down to its density. A pound of balsa wood will have the same BTUs as a pound of oak, it'll just be a much larger piece of wood! Density also can make a difference in how fast that wood dries down as you never want to burn green wood - it creates creosote problems in the chimney. But knowing the burning qualities can make your wood stove or fireplace life a lot easier. If you just want a small fire for show or for a short period, then burn something like cottonwood or silver maple. These also make great kindling. If it's the middle of winter and cold and you need the heat, that's when you go to things like honeylocust, oak, ash or walnut. If we assume that oaks are our standard, then let's give them a value of 100% for heat units. Pecan, mulberry, and honeylocust will be in the same ball park as oak. All of those are good. Shagbark hickory and black locust are about 10% higher in heat units, but black locust can be a pain to split. Hedge or Osage orange is the heaviest wood we have, but should only be used in a wood stove as it sparks so badly to be used in a fireplace. Other good woods, in the 80 to 95% of oak range include hackberry, black walnut, and ash. Hard maple is in that same group and that's virtually any maple species OTHER than silver. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Dealing with late falling leaves

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We'd all like to think that by the week before Christmas we're pretty well done dealing with tree leaves, and most years that's what happens.. but not this year! The past couple of weeks I've seen a lot of people out with rakes or lawnmowers trying to get the slow parade of leaves that keep falling onto the lawn! This is just the lingering effects of that hard freeze and the marcescence that some trees are experiencing this year. If you think that you can keep your lawn pristine all winter long, especially this winter, just dispense with that notion now. Some trees that were holding leaves have lost quite a few already while others are still hanging on strong and may not finish dropping all their leaves until new leaves start to come out next spring. If you get a heavy leaf drop, so that there are several inches on your yard, it may be advisable to get those raked up or mowed up and bagged or just mowed up and shredded so they can break down more easily. My biggest concern is a heavy snow that will mat down a lot of leaves and possibly cause issues next spring. If this happens, make sure you get out in late winter or early spring and get those leaves raked up so air and sunlight can get down to the grass plants. I honestly wouldn't be too concerned about even one layer of leaves right now - the wind does blow and they'll scatter about quite readily. If the day is nice and you feel the urge to do something then certainly raking them up would be fine. If you are using your lawnmower though, don't start setting it down lower to get more of the leaves - leave the mower set high! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.