

The Slick Ads are Getting Slicker!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Pick up any Sunday newspaper, anywhere in Kansas or other states north of the Mason-Dixon line, this time of year and you'll see them. They are the ads for plants or seeds for lawns or gardens. The pictures are shiny and colorful and full of greens of spring and summer. When compared to the brown desolate world outside our windows, they look so enticing. And the text is sooo seductive. As you feel yourself getting sucked into the ad deeper and deeper, you just need to put it down and walk away. These ads are classic cases of if they sound too good to be true, they probably are. Many of the items being advertised are quite honestly not well adapted to our Kansas climate. Or they are non-native trees that will become a weed. Don't believe claims of being drought tolerant or no insect or disease pests. It just doesn't happen! Every plant has insect and disease pests, every plant has environmental limits of tolerance. Often the plant material that is shipped via mail order firms is smaller than what you may be thinking. Obviously, low prices are going to be directly related to smaller plant material. If you're ordering seeds, make sure that the quantity you are getting is appropriate to the price you are paying. The bottom line is that I like to purchase my plants and supplies from local sources or at least within 100 miles of my home. I then know that these plants, especially when purchased from a locally owned firm, are probably going to be well adapted to my area, AND I get to see what the plant looks like before I buy it! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Starting Plants from Seed

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We are getting to the time of late winter when we need to start planting to have transplants the proper size when the right time arrives for transplanting out in the garden. Each species takes a differing amount of time to go from seed to transplantable. Variations among species exist in germination time or simply the time to get a plant up to the right size. We're actually getting a little late for the cole crops, like cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower or lettuce. We probably should have planted these about a week or ten days ago, but there is still time to get them started, you just wouldn't be setting them out until mid April as opposed to an early April planting date. Probably the most popular transplants that folks try to grow themselves are tomatoes and peppers, or what I like to call, the salsa twins! Tomatoes only need about 6 weeks from seeding to transplant, peppers need more like 8 weeks. I normally like to shoot to transplant tomatoes about May 10th and peppers a week later, May 17th. These are both warm weather loving crops and normally the soil hasn't warmed up enough until mid May. If we end up with a warm spring you can maybe push that up to May 1st on tomatoes, but earlier than that isn't worth it. Okay, so we're still a month off of starting either of these crops though. Peppers we can probably seed in our flats indoors around March 22nd and tomatoes a week later on March 29th. Both of these crops prefer seed germination temperatures around 80 degrees so you may need to get a warming mat at a greenhouse to get these started off right. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Preparing for Asparagus planting

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Asparagus is a wonderful perennial vegetable that seems to be going through a resurgence. If you don't have an asparagus bed, you may want to consider planting one. While it's still a few weeks early to plant asparagus, it isn't too early to start planning for it. One thing to remember is that after you start your asparagus bed it will probably be 3 to 4 years before you can really start harvesting it because you have to get plants well established with large crowns and root systems. Since we are dealing with a perennial plant you don't want to plant it in the middle of your vegetable garden. Most people will place it on the side of the garden or even have a separate area, right next to the rhubarb patch if you have one, is good! While it is somewhat tolerant of a wide range of soils, it prefers deep well drained soils in full sun. It's a good idea to take a soil test as asparagus is a heavy feeder of nitrogen and phosphorus. Once the soil dries out enough start to work it up and incorporate as much organic matter or well rotted manure as possible. You will plant the asparagus in a fairly deep trench on a mound. Then you'll start filling the trench in as the plants grow in the first season. The best time for planting is March 15th to April 15th. You can plant 2 year old crowns, but they are more expensive and most gardeners start with 1 year old crowns. Good varieties include Jersey Giant, Jersey King, Jersey Night, Jersey Supreme and Purple Passion. These are all male hybrids that will generally outproduce older varieties like Martha or Mary Washington by about 300%!

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