

Uneven Tree Leafing out

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've had numerous calls and photos emailed to me over the past few weeks regarding trees that were leafing out in a fairly uneven pattern. I've seen this in maples, hackberries, elms and a few other species. In most cases these trees had very heavy seed loads. Often part of the tree was leafing out normally but parts of the tree seemed to be very slow to leaf out with just a few leaves showing up here and there. The fact that we are seeing this same thing in several different species of trees quickly rules out any kind of insect or disease issue. What we ARE dealing with is some very basic plant physiology. An extended winter slowed down normal spring development. Often times we see seeds come on these trees and then all fall off before the leaves even show up. This year the flowering was late and then it got warm and everything started to pop at once. A tree or any plant can only do so much at once. With the stress of producing seeds and then also trying to produce leaves, the trees are delaying leaves in at least some parts of the tree while it finishes maturing the seeds. In the trees that I've looked at, those branches that have good leaves have few if any seeds. And those branches that have heavy seed loads still have few if any leaves. Sometimes a tree will put on heavy seed loads if it is under extreme stress and that can be a bad sign. For most of what I've seen this spring I think it's just an unusually heavy seed load, the seeds are starting to mature and fall now and before too long we should see the rest of the tree leaf out in a normal fashion. But if it stays dry, water! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Preventing Fruit on Ornamental Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Every year I get the question. I love my flowering pear or flowering apple but I hate all those stupid fruits that fall off the tree later on. The long term answer is that these fruiting ornamentals should never be planted where they'll hang over any hard surface. But if you are being bothered by fruit on a sidewalk, it's a little late for that. There are some products that can be sprayed on fruit trees that will cause the fruit to fall off before they get very big. There are hormone sprays that will work but to be right honest I have had trouble tracking these down in the trade. But there is an option. The insecticide Sevin, when used at heavy rates within 35 days of blooming, will cause most of the fruit to abort. You want to wait until just after the tree has finished blooming as Sevin is very toxic to honeybees. But don't wait too long as the treatment really needs to be applied within 35 days of full bloom. You want to use liquid sevin and mix 2 tablespoons of sevin per gallon of water. Thoroughly spray the tree getting good coverage on as much of the fruit as possible. Stems of the tiny fruit should turn yellow and wrinkle within 7 to 10 days and start to drop off after two weeks. If you don't see any fruit drop after 2 weeks, make a second application. This treatment is going to be very effective on apples and crabapples. Success on pears may not be as good. Pears and apples are very closely related though so it is worth a try. As always you should spray early in the morning or late in the evening when the winds are the calmest. If it's very windy, just don't spray. No need to have drift issues! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Fruit Tree Pest Control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I receive a lot of calls every spring about treating fruit trees, especially apples, to prevent bugs, specifically the little worm that gets into those apple trees. Many of us quite honestly take the approach of, I'll get around a few worms, it's easier than spraying. Spraying fruit trees for insect pests isn't a once or twice a season situation. You need to start spraying now and then spray every two weeks up until about the time you harvest. And you can't just splash a little spray around part of the tree - if you want to be effective you need thorough coverage. If you haven't tuned me out yet, then keep listening. Most of the time we need to spray with a combination of insecticide and fungicide to control insects and diseases. While we don't have many disease issues with our fruit crops, there are exceptions and grapes is one of the those. If you don't spray your grapes to control black rot, you may not have any grapes for the birds to get or for you to harvest. We used to have some really good fruit tree sprays that were premixed packages of insecticides and a fungicide. There's one or two left but they are getting harder to find! You may have to do your own mix of insecticides and a fungicide. Make sure you read the labels to see if you can mix them or need to apply them separately, then make sure that the spray is labeled for fruit trees. Then read and follow label directions for mixing rates and how often you need to respray. And now you see why many of us just don't bother. If we do get some fruit, we count our blessing and then just cut around some worms! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.