

Gardening Tips for August 10 - 16, 2015

What's all that light colored grass in my yard

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is the time of year that I see a LOT of funny grasses showing up in people's yards. Let me just say that crabgrass and foxtail are doing very well right now and they are in everybody's yard, even folks that don't think they have it in their perfect lawns. These weedy annual grasses come along from May through July and about now they are in their prime and making your lawn's life miserable. Early in the season these grasses are generally just fitting right in with everything else or at least small enough that they aren't really noticeable. But by now, fescue and bluegrass are feeling a little bit more stress from heat and lower rainfall so they are acting sort of dormant, yet the foxtail and crabgrass are going strong and still growing rapidly, often shooting up seed heads. But as we go on through August and into September the insults get even worse. Those crazy grasses start to get paler and paler in color to the point that the crabgrass may very well look yellow before long. While we do have herbicides that can control even large crabgrass, I'd say that doing so is a waste of time. There's already been serious seed production and the problem will be back next year. Spend the coming weeks making sure that the grass is being mowed 3 to 3½ inches tall, many lawns that I see are NOT mowed tall enough. Then overseed this fall to make the lawn thicker. If you get a tall thick lawn, these grasses can't germinate and grow. Then, next spring, make sure that you get a crabgrass preventer applied at the proper time to prevent a repeat of this years fiasco! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Blister Beetles

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Blister beetles are fascinating. As a kid I was nervous when I saw them because I figured they'd attack me and I'd be one large walking blister! Now that I understand them better I find them fascinating! And while I know that they won't attack me, the same thing can't be said for some of our garden plants. There are several species of blister beetles and several of them are quite common. They get their name because they can produce an oily fluid from between body segments that is quite caustic and can cause blisters if it gets on your skin. An additional problem is that if blister beetles get baled up in hay and the hay is fed to horses, it can kill the horses. For obvious reasons it is hard to tell how many blister beetles it takes to kill a horse, but given their sensitivity, the threshold has been placed as low as 30 and as high as a few hundred. The gray, striped and black blister beetles are the most common ones and the ones you are most likely to encounter. The larvae of blister beetles feed on grasshopper eggs, but adults will readily feed on garden plants. What often happens is that they arrive in a swarm, devour a lot of vegetation and then move on. Tomatoes are a common food plant. If you see blister beetles in your garden, treat them soon with almost any standard garden insecticide. Spray the critters and the plants thoroughly. Because of the swarming transient nature of blister beetles normally just one treatment is needed, unless a second swarm shows up later. Read and follow pesticide label directions and observe post application waiting periods until harvest. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

Otte.

Green June Beetles and Peaches

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I'm not sure why they call them June beetles when they are active in August, but we are seeing a lot of activity by green June beetles right now especially around peach trees with ripening fruit. Many folks are reporting a good peach crop this year. Green June beetles are very attracted to ripening fruit especially ripening peaches. Green June beetles are big. We're talking an inch long here. They are very pretty being a rather velvety green looking beetle marked with yellowish brown on parts of the back of the insect. They are strong flyers but very clumsy flyers. They often run into the sides of buildings or even you if you are in the way. They sometimes startle people who mistake them for bumblebees or other stinging insects. As I said they are attracted to peaches as they start to ripen. They can ruin a peach in just a few days as they have quite ravenous appetites. They can be controlled with many garden insecticides, but you have to get the spray right on them. They may pick up the insecticide eating a peach that's been sprayed but they'll do a lot of damage before they die. Your best approach may be to see when they are most active and then get out and spray at that time of day. It will help to pick up any fruit that has fallen on the ground as the rotting fruit will attract more beetles. Ultimately, the best approach may be to pick the fruit as it starts to get soft and take it inside to finish ripening. It is interesting that over the past ten years this traditionally southern U.S. insect has been increasingly common in Kansas. Coincidence or climate change? Hmmmm. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.