

Corn Earworms

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I get to judge a lot of crops and horticulture at county fairs. The biggest challenge in growing sweet corn that I see at these fairs, is dealing with the corn earworm. Corn earworm is that disgusting grayish caterpillar that gets in the end of the sweet corn ear and eats up the corn. It's nasty to deal with. Ironically, this same species will attack tomato, field corn, cotton and grain sorghum. It's not picky, it'll eat almost anything! The female moth looks for stands of corn where the silks are nice and silky soft green. She lays her eggs in those silks, the young caterpillar hatches and follows the silks down to the kernels of new and developing corn. She may lay several eggs, but the caterpillars are cannibalistic and one usually eats up the others leaving only one in the ear. Once the silks on the ear of corn start to turn brown and dry, which happens after pollination, the female moth will no longer lay eggs there. To keep earworms out, the silks must be treated every 2 to 3 days over a 2 week period. For most homeowners, chemical controls come down to products containing cyfluthrin or spinosad. Spinosad is very effective and is an organic control. Sprays have to hit the silks to be effective. A more time consuming yet effective method is to apply mineral oil or a light horticultural oil inside the silk end of the ear with a medicine dropper. Apply 1/2 to 3/4 of a dropper into each silk as the silks start to turn brown. There may be some damage from earworms but it should minimize it. Applying before the silks brown may interfere with pollination. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

Otte.

Puncturevine

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Last week I talked about sandburs, this week let's talk about puncturevine or what some folks call Mexican Sandbur. Puncturevine is a vining broadleaf plant that grows flat on the ground. One plant can radiate out to be over ten feet across. It has little light yellow flowers, it has a compound leaf with many little leaflets and has a single taproot at the center. The seeds of puncture vine, sometimes also called goat's head, is hard, angular and has 1 long spine and 2 short spines. This is the seed that flattens bicycle and lawn mower tires and get's stuck in the soles of your shoes. Like many weeds, it is going to thrive in bare soils along driveways and sidewalks as well as waste areas or areas that have a thin and scattered grass stand. Naturally a thick stand of grass is your best defense against this weed. Crabgrass preventers will offer a little help, but if you have a lot of puncturevine, post emerge treatments will be necessary. Any of the broadleaf weed killers that contain 2,4-D, MCPP and dicamba are going to work great BUT. Remember that vapors from these products can drift for quite some distance, especially in windy weather or with temperatures above 80 degrees so only use in cool calm conditions. In areas where you know you've had problems, you will need to treat 3 or 4 times per summer. Learn to identify the plant when it is small and treat them before they start blooming if possible. Mature plants loaded with seeds can be killed, but the seeds are already there. You want to try to break the seed production cycle and that will take a couple of years. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Harvesting Onions and Garlic

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This was a pretty good year for onions and garlic, and for most folks, it's about time to harvest. Garlic is best harvested when bottom leaves are dying but there's still about 4 green leaves on the top. With onions, we generally harvest once about half the plants have tops that have fallen over. With both onions and garlic it is important to carefully knock excess dirt off and then get them out of the sun to dry or cure. You want all excess moisture out of the plant and that may take 3 to 4 weeks. Onions are often spread on screens but both garlic and onions can be tied together by their tops in clumps of 5 to 10 plants and hung to be allowed to dry. Bundling and hanging is how I do it. Don't rush the drying process. With onions, check the neck, that's the area just above the bulb, to make sure it is dry. Large necked onion varieties obviously will take longer. With garlic, check the clove wrappers inside the bulb to make sure they are dry. Once dry, you can trim the roots to about a half inch long and the necks can be trimmed ½ to one inch above the bulb. If you are still finding moisture in the neck, the bulb isn't dry and needs more time to cure. Once everything is dry and trimmed up, store in mesh bags in a cool dry location. Storing in a plastic bag will shorten storage life and encourage sprouting. Best temperature for long term storage is 45 to 55 degrees. Never store garlic in a refrigerator as that will hasten sprouting. Storage life depends on the type of onion or garlic. Vidalia or sweet types will have the shortest storage life. Garlic can store from 6 to 12 months. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.