

And Still It Rains

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The good news that while it is wet we aren't setting records, at least not yet. I just keep reminding myself that in May of 1995 we had 17 inches of rain and survived that. But wet weather does create challenges for the home gardener. I just have to say it again that if you have an established yard there is no reason to be watering it. Yes, we had a few hot and sunny days last week, but there was no established turf anywhere showing stress. It honestly needs to turn off dry for about two weeks before we need to even begin to think about watering lawns. If you create a situation where you have waterlogged soils, and not even really standing water, you can start to lose grass in just a few days. The rain is enough, we don't need to be adding more with sprinkler systems. Vegetable and flower gardens are going to be the most challenged right now. I know people are trying to get veggies and flowers planted and weeds controlled and we just can't get more than about 3 or 4 days of drying weather. One of the things you really need to be careful of is compaction on these wet soils. You don't want to use a hoe or any mechanical device in wet soils as you will just make a mess. If you have weeding that needs to take place, pull them up but then carry them out to the edge of the garden. Laying weeds, especially weedy grasses, down on wet soil may allow them to reroot and keep growing. There are a few instances where herbicides can be used in veggie and flower gardens but read and follow all the labels carefully, and don't use a sprayer that's had 2,4-D in it! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Proper Fertilization of vegetable gardens

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Fertilizing gardens seems to be something that people either over do or under do! While some gardens have such high levels of fertility they don't have a problem, we often find that under performance of gardens is often due to inadequate fertilization. The problem is going to be compounded this year by the saturated soils and nitrogen that is being lost due to leaching and denitrification. What you don't want to do though is to just go out and start dumping nitrogen fertilizer on your garden, especially if you haven't done a soil test in the past 5 years or so. If the last soil test showed very high levels of phosphorus and potassium then you are okay with using a straight nitrogen fertilizer like nitrate of soda, ammonium sulfate, blood meal or urea. If your soil test shows only moderate to low levels of phosphorus, then you need to be using a fertilizer with phosphorus also like triple 12 or triple 13. Applying excess nitrogen when there are not good phosphorus levels in the soil results in a lot of green vegetative growth, okay if you are growing leafy green vegetables but not a lot of flowers and fruit production which is bad if you are growing tomatoes. The other thing to keep in mind is to apply the right amount. For things like triple 12, nitrate of soda, ammonium sulfate or blood meal, apply about 1 to 1½ cups per 30 foot of row. For urea, use ½ cup per foot of row. If you are having problems finding these fertilizers you can use a standard lawn fertilizer that has NO weed killers in it at the rate of about ¾ cup per 30 foot of row. Obviously one with weed killer would be bad! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK,

I'm Chuck Otte.

Evaluating Tree Health

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Homeowners often worry about the health of their tree. They worry about any little change that they might see and often try to help their tree when they don't really have any idea if the tree needs help! For example, the 17 year cicadas have pretty well peaked and will be gone in a couple more weeks. But because they lay eggs at the ends of tree branches, you may all of a sudden start seeing dead branch tips. While it can look unsightly and be unsettling there's nothing you can really do or need to do. When I am asked to evaluate tree health I always let homeowners know that while there is no way to say exactly if or when a tree may experience a failure like a branch breaking out of the tree, there are warning signs to look for. I like to check the new growth on trees. Most trees are going to put on at least 4 to 6 inches of new growth per year. Even mature slow growing trees will do that. Younger and shorter lived trees can put on a couple feet of growth per year. If there's good uniform growth then that's a good sign. What I'm really looking for are any clues to stress. Trees should have root flares all around the base. If one side of a tree is flat with no root flares, that may be an indicator of a problem. I also want to look for any evidence of decay or rot. Sometimes it's well hidden, but other times it's obvious. Once decay gets started in a tree it can spread up and especially down very quickly and is a warning sign of issues to come. A real bad sign that you don't want to see is lots of mushrooms growing out of the tree especially at the base or roots of a tree! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm

Chuck Otte.