

Fruit Tree sprays

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. You have two choices when it comes to fruit trees: spray them or don't spray them. In all honesty, I don't spray my fruit trees. They are resistant to leaf diseases, they are far enough removed from other apple trees that I rarely have insect issues and the sooty blotch I get on the fruit I just wash off. Plus, the fact that it isn't convenient for me to spray every 10 to 14 days like I should. If you consistently want to have high quality fruit however, you should probably plan on spraying your trees with both an insecticide and fungicide. I don't like the systemic products - they simply don't do what they are advertised to do. It's getting harder but you can still find all in one products that have both an insecticide and fungicide. I'm currently trying to get at least one store in town to carry one particular product, but stay tuned. If not, you will need to mix an insecticide, like malathion or methoxychlor with a fungicide - I'd recommend Immunox early in the season, through about June 1 and then Captan after that. This is most important on apples, but peaches can benefit from it too. Hold off on spraying until after most of the flower petals have fallen. At that time you need to start spraying every 7 to 14 days. Spraying every 7 to 10 days early in the season or when it's very rainy is recommended. After about June 1st you can switch to every ten to 14 days depending on the weather. A spreader sticker will help keep the product in place, but a hard driving rain of one inch or more will wash off most of the spray requiring a re-treatment. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Reducing Fertilizer use on lawns

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This time of year I read a lot of lawn and garden ads in the newspapers and advertising flyers. There are a lot of ads for lawn fertilizers and weed control - a LOT of ads. You can spend a lot of money in the course of a year on fertilizer and pesticides for your lawn. Sadly, a lot of it may not be needed. Now, there's nothing wrong with any of the products you see advertised - there's not too much snake oil in lawn fertilizers. But it becomes very easy to over do it! The most important treatment you can make on your cool season lawn every year is a weed control and fertilizer application in October. If you're only going to do one, do that one. Second most important may be the crabgrass preventer about this time of year. Unless you have a specific identified problem, you don't need a soil insect control treatment or a turf fungicide application. There's far more grub treatment applied every year than actual grub problems. One of the best ways to reduce fertilizer need in your lawn is to use a mulching mower and quit bagging your clippings. When you bag clippings you just remove nutrients that would be naturally recycled right off the lawn. Mow regularly and the clippings will break down quickly. Thatch issues are more likely to be caused by frequent light watering, not by getting rid of the bagger. I do like using a fertilizer that has sulfur however. Most of our lawns are on soils with high pH, meaning over 7.0 and often over 7.5. Sulfur in your fertilizer will help to slowly lower the soil pH and this will make fescue and definitely bluegrass, happier!

This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Watch what fertilizer you are buying

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There is a trend in lawn fertilizers that worries me. It's called no phosphorus fertilizers. In many urban areas, decades of lawn fertilization have built up phosphorus levels to the point that excessive amounts of phosphorus are in the soils and applied phosphorus fertilizers runs off the lawns with rain or irrigation into the storm water system and into the rivers. This creates high phosphorus issues in lakes and streams that can lead to algae blooms like we've seen in Milford Lake. If you have an old well established lawn, especially if you've soil tested and know that you have high soil phosphorus levels, these fertilizers will work just fine for you. Unfortunately, our native prairie soils are extremely low in phosphorus and our desirable cool season grasses need good phosphorus levels to develop into a thick and healthy lawn. These lawns need regular treatments of phosphorus to keep from having thin stunted stands of grass. The first step in this process is to know what kind of soil nutrient levels you have. If you have a lawn that is looking really good, you can probably switch to a no phosphorus fertilizer (meaning the middle number of those three you see on the fertilizer bag is a zero). If your lawn is only so-so, start with a soil test. If you have good phosphorus levels then we need to look at other issues, like shade, low mowing height or other management issues. But if you have a new lawn in a fairly new neighborhood and the soil test comes back with very low soil phosphorus levels, you need to avoid those fertilizers and get one with phosphorus. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.