

Early September is Lawn Fertilization Time

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. For those of us with the traditional fescue or bluegrass lawn, how good, or bad, the lawn looks next spring is directly related to the care that you give it this fall. September and October are peak months for getting your lawn back into shape and it starts now! If you are needing to overseed thin areas or reseed non-existent lawn areas, then the sooner the better. The clock is ticking. For those who have an acceptable stand of grass, what you need to do now is fertilizer. I said fertilize, NOT weed and feed. If you know from a soil test that you have low phosphorus levels OR you suspect as much because past plantings of grass just sort of sit there and do nothing, then apply a fertilizer with nitrogen and phosphorus. Some possibilities include 11-52-0, 16-20-0 would be great if you can find it, but you can also use triple 12 or triple 13. If you know you need phosphorus it might not hurt to core aerate it first to help get that phosphorus into the soil. The other thing you need to be doing right now, and all the time, is to mow tall. So many of the weed and stand issues I see on a regular basis comes back to low mowing heights. Bluegrass should be 2½ to 3 inches and tall fescue 3 to 3½. Then in the latter half of October we're going to put on another fertilizer application, this one should be a high nitrogen application. As for the weed and feed - these products are designed to control all those weeds that bloom in the spring. They bloom in the spring but start growing this fall. But many haven't started to germinate yet so wait until late October. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Dividing or Re-setting Peonies

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If I were to name five plants that you would find around any old farmstead or old garden of any kind, I can guarantee that peony would be one of them. Peonies are tolerant of many soil conditions. They can withstand long period of drought, they bloom nearly every year and require very little maintenance. When they have an average or just okay bloom they are beautiful. When they have an outstanding bloom year, they are incredible! Once we get past Labor Day, peonies are pretty well done for the year. Anytime from now through next spring you should cut off the plants at the base and remove all the material to the trash or a burn pile. There is a leaf disease that overwinters on old foliage. Mowing the plants off or trying to compost the plants simply allows more of the pathogen to stick around. Fall is also the time to move or divide peony plants. The one thing that people do wrong with peonies, or happens over time, is that they get too deep in the soil. The eyes or buds on the crowns of peony plants need to be at least one inch below the ground but not more than two inches OR they won't bloom (sorry, ants have nothing to do with it.) If yours haven't been blooming, dig them up and reset them shallower. If you have big old plants you can also divide them at this time. Those peony root masses get big after a decade or so, so be prepared. You can dig down beside them and just slice off a crown that has a few eyes OR you can dig up the entire thing and cut it up with an axe into 2 or 3 or more sections and replant them, making sure the eyes are at the right depth! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

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Dealing with Little Barley

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Little barley is a weedy grass that has been increasingly common and can be a real nuisance. Most people don't even know they have it until mid spring when the seeds start to mature and they start getting stuck in your socks or painfully between the pads of your pet's foot or in the fur in the ears. At that point there is nothing you can do about little barley other than to make a note of where it is. Little barley is a winter annual grass. It starts growing in September and October. It can actually look like a nice lawn grass in the fall. It overwinters and early in the spring it starts growing rapidly and sending up lots and lots of seed heads. Even if you keep mowing them off, new ones keep replacing them, seemingly ever shorter until the plant dies. The seed can also mature very quickly and that's why it is such a problem. We have limited resources, meaning herbicides, to work on this rascal. Ultimately a tall thick lawn will keep it from becoming a problem so keep working on that. In the short run though, the best approach may be grassy weed preventers, a.k.a. crabgrass preventers. If you are overseeding your yard, just forget about controlling it this fall. Surflan, sold as Weed Impede by Monterey Lawn and Garden products is labeled for use on little barley in warm season grasses and tall fescue, but not bluegrass. The other option is to take a broader approach and use Dimension, active ingredient dithiopyr, which is labeled for all barley species which would include little barley. You need to apply these products soon and water them in to activate them. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.