

How Cold Can Fruit Blossoms Handle?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Sure enough - just as we had several weeks of nice weather we knew a cold snap was going to come along, and we aren't out of the woods yet - we'll probably have another. So what everyone wants to know is, has the cold, or will the cold, hurt my fruit tree's chance of having fruit. The definitive answer is, maybe. First off it depends on what species of fruit tree you have, what stage of bud or bloom it is in and then what the microclimate right around the tree was like. Then you have to take into account what was the absolute lowest temperature the tree experienced and how long was it that cold, you see what I'm saying. This isn't a case of at 29 degrees there is no damage and at 28 degrees you have death of all blossoms. It's a sliding scale where you have a minimum threshold where damage first starts and then as the temperature drops more of the blossoms are killed. Apricots in full bloom will see 10% blossom kill at 27 degrees, but at 22 degrees you'll have 90% kill. Apricots and some peaches have been coming on strong. Both of these have that 10% blossom kill at 27 degrees. If there was actually fruit set, then damage starts at 28 degrees. Those are the two species furthest along at this point. Tart cherries, apples and pears are, for the most part holding tighter and so would be more resistant to cold injury. They can probably all take temperatures down to 24 or 23 before we start to see damage right now. So, for the most part, we may have escaped this round of frosty weather with minimal damage, but remember, it's still just March! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Preventing Weeds in Perennial Beds and Asparagus

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Perennial beds, whether they are flowers, shrubs, even things like asparagus and rhubarb, can really be a challenge to keep weed free. For years we've used mulch and hand weeding or hoeing to try to keep the weeds under control and those options are still legitimate possibilities, but there are other options. Early in the season, before plants start to grow, you can go in and spray glyphosate over the top and kill any weeds that are growing. This is a good way to get those early season weedy grasses or to even kill back brome grass or bluegrass that's trying to get into the bed. After you've got those weeds killed, and before anything else starts growing, you can apply a weed preventer. There are many different products labeled for different uses. Trifluralin is one that is found in many products - make sure, in the case of asparagus or rhubarb, that the product you choose is labeled for use on those crops. These are often granular products so apply them and then rake or water to activate them. Here's what is important to remember - these are weed preventers. They work by interrupting the normal seed germination process. Once the plant is already growing, they won't work - it is a preventer. If the weed you're trying to control is a perennial and moving in with runners, like Bermudagrass, these weed preventers won't work either. You have to try to stop these troublesome plants at the edge of the garden with glyphosate or a selective control product. But for those other troublesome weeds, get an early jump and stop the weeds before they even get started! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

Otte.

Planting Grass Seed

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It is now officially spring. Finally. Or at least the calendar says it is. Coincidentally, this is also just about the time that I strongly encourage people to get their lawn grass seed planted if they need to start a new lawn or merely want to overseed some thin areas. There's a few things that you need to keep in mind to make sure all your hard work doesn't go for naught. First of all, if you didn't take a soil test, apply some starter fertilizer. Many parts of town, especially the newer parts of town, used to be in pasture or fields that are likely very low in phosphorus. Starter fertilizer will help encourage good early growth. Secondly, plant an approved grass species which is essentially tall fescue or Kentucky bluegrass. Fast growing things like ryegrass or some of the creeping fescues may in fact green up fast but they really are not well suited to our climate, especially when it turns off hot and dry with a blast furnace southwest wind in late July. Tall fescue and Kentucky Bluegrass, while not liking that kind of weather either, are better able to withstand it. Next, make sure you get the seed INTO the soil. You can not just sprinkle it across the surface and expect good results. You need to rake it into the soil or use a power seeder that actually gets the seed below the soil surface. Then, get it watered in, but don't start watering unless you're willing to stay with it. You can wait for rain, but if you're in a hurry, get the sprinklers out and water it up. We want to get this done as soon as possible so the plants have a chance to get a good root system established before summer.

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