

Conservation Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If you are planting one or two trees in your yard for a nice shade tree you don't mind spending a couple hundred dollars. But if you are trying to plant a windbreak or stream bank stabilization or wildlife planting, then spending even \$50 per tree can get pricey in a hurry. Fortunately, for activities such as this, the Kansas Forest Service makes available tree and shrub seedlings every spring and fall. In the spring you can get bare root seedlings for about a dollar a piece. In the fall you can get containerized seedlings which are a unit of 25 for \$50. These all have to be the same species and you have to buy a unit of 25.

Remember though that these are seedlings. They are going to be ten to eighteen inches tall and basically one or two year old plants. They are designed to be used where you need to put a lot of plants in the ground and have the time and patience to baby them along for the first few years while they get some size. Weed and grass control around the plants will help get them off to a good start and this can be done with herbicides or weed barrier fabric. Likewise, irrigation in dry years is very crucial. Selection of fall plants is somewhat limited but includes Black Hills Spruce, bur oak, eastern redcedar, eastern white pine, fragrant sumac (a shrub), pecan, ponderosa pine, redbud, southwestern white pine and swamp white oak. If you need an order form or have questions about these you can contact me at the Extension Office. You can see more information on each species and order on line at kansasforests.org. You can pick up the trees in Manhattan.

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Stinkhorns and other mushrooms

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I like mushrooms and that has nothing to do with culinary mushrooms, although I do like those too! I love getting lots of rain in the late summer as it always guarantees that we will have an explosion of fungi fruiting bodies a.k.a. mushrooms, showing up,! Let me just get two things out of the way. There's nothing you can do or spray to stop them. These are arising from decay fungi organisms that in some cases are several feet underground. The fungus lives by breaking down rich sources of organic matter like old tree roots or tree stumps. They do us a favor as is often documented by the darker green grass around these mushrooms, the darker grass coming from nutrients released as the fungi breaks down the organic matter. The second thing I want to clear up is that I will not even try to determine if they are safe to eat. The differences between a tasty mushroom and a deadly poisonous one can be minute and I'm not going to risk it for myself or anyone else. Many of the mushrooms are the big white ones that grow in a circle. Others are what we call inky caps as they are brownish or offwhite and often turn dark very quickly. Others are very slender, sometimes slimy and to be blunt, they are rather, uh, rude looking. These are the stinkhorns. They often do have unpleasant odors associated with them and can have common names like Devil's dipstick, dog stinkhorn and lizard's claw. All these mushrooms will literally explode overnight and often be gone in a few days. All I can recommend doing is mowing them off, kicking them over or take a golf club to them. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Mimosa Webworms and other brown leaves

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We're seeing a lot of trees around town with brown leaves. Now, sometimes brown or dead leaves on a tree are not a good thing. In many cases though, especially in late August and September, it's often nothing to be concerned about. Leaves on green ash trees have suddenly started becoming very darkened with spots on them and then the entire leaf turns brown and they fall off. This is a fairly common leaf disease that we will see in wet summers. The infection period was several weeks ago so trying to spray anything now is a waste of time. Remember, fungicides are like vaccinations - they only work when applied before the disease gets started. Another brown leaf issue that has just exploded in the past ten days is mimosa webworm which is more often seen on honeylocusts than on mimosa trees. The mimosa webworm is small, only ½ inch long when fully grown. When disturbed, they will move backwards quite rapidly. Mimosa webworms often fold leaves together with webbing to protect themselves from predators and then feed on the leaf surfaces. The leaves often turn scorched or brown looking and I have seen several trees around the area that looked nearly entirely brown and I could understand why homeowners would be concerned. While both of these situations are bad looking this late in the season they don't really do much damage. Both are preventable with applications earlier in the season, but trying to do anything now would be the proverbial closing of the barn door after the horses are already gone. It's unsightly, but not fatal for your trees! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Hazard Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've been getting the chance to look at a lot of trees lately. Some of those have non-threatening situations as I discussed yesterday. But on others we are seeing very serious problems. These are trees that have been losing leaves all summer and the crowns of the trees are looking thinner and thinner and dead branches are becoming very obvious. In some cases, in some extreme cases we are seeing mushroom growth out of the trunk of the tree or on the roots close to the base of the tree. These mushroom growths often don't look like traditional mushrooms - they may very well look like chunks of whitish dense foam that sort of have a slickish feel to them. Regardless what these mushroom growths look like, they are never a good sign. Mushrooms are part of wood decay fungus organisms. Wood decay organisms live on dead wood. A sound tree is not going to have dead wood in the trunk. When the trunk of a tree starts to die and starts to hollow out, it suddenly starts to lose strength. If you have obvious voids, holes, in the trunk or larger limbs, this is also not a good sign. Trees like this are called hazard trees. They are structurally unsound and are at a higher risk of failing. Failing is a nice way of saying branches may come crashing down or the entire tree could blow over in the next good wind storm. If you have a tree with mushrooms growing out of it or lots of large gaping holes in the trunk, you need to get this tree removed as soon as possible. There is no way to predict when a tree may fail. But if you have a hazard tree and you don't take it down your gambling! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Fall Pruning - Not Yet

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I was visiting with a homeowner last week about various trees and shrubs in their yard. Several of them were likely in need of some pruning or trimming, in some cases quite a bit. They were ready to start the project that day and I had to encourage them to just hold off. Fall pruning can be done on some species, but the timing, and which species you can work on, becomes very critical. First of all anything that blooms first thing in the spring, think of plants like lilacs, forsythia, and spirea, should never be pruned in the fall. All of these plants bloom in the spring on buds that have just been formed or are in the process of being formed. Fall pruning can remove all of that bud wood leaving you with only a few scattered blossoms. Those plants need to be pruned in the spring right after they bloom. For plants that are grown for foliage primarily, you don't want to do heavy pruning until they have moved further into dormancy. Heavy pruning now will stimulate the plant to start producing new growth, especially given all the rain and the lush growing conditions we currently have. This lush succulent new growth is going to be very sensitive to cold weather and may not be able to harden off by winter. If that happens and if we have a severe winter season, which I don't believe those forecasts, this tender new growth can be frozen off. So if you want to prune this fall, wait until after about mid October. By then, plants are moving into dormancy, air and soil temperatures are cooler and they are far less likely to produce new growth in response. Or just wait until March! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.