

Unusual Bloomers

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Most homeowners don't think about their spring flowering trees and shrubs until they bloom, in the spring. Well, I can guarantee you that those flower buds were not made in the spring - no those flowers that bloom in the spring are from buds that develop in July and August of the previous year. Next spring's flowers are going to be made on buds that have already been developed by the plants. They aren't very big yet, but they are present. However, some plants just can't keep their buds dormant. This can happen almost any year but is far more likely to occur after we've had a hot and often dry spell in July or August and then we have cool wet weather in August or September. I was driving down Ash Street last week and saw a large saucer magnolia tree with probably 15 to 20 buds or flowers. This year I've also seen spirea shrubs blooming. In other years I've seen flowering quince, lilac, forsythia, even fruit trees with scattered blossoms. As the rest of August and September move along, we may see more blossoms. While sometimes this seems like a lot of blooming, most of the time these blossoms are an insignificant amount compared to the flower buds yet to bloom in the more normal time next spring. There's no way to stop these buds from breaking dormancy. If you have fruit trees it is important to water them in July if we don't have rainfall. This irrigation can be very helpful for any fruit crop on the tree, or if you don't have a fruit crop this year, it's important to help the tree form blossoms for next spring. But in the meantime, enjoy those serendipitous blooms! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Mosquitoes and Chiggers

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There's nothing like a rainy early August to insure that we have plenty of mosquitoes for the late summer time frame. Early in the year we are very tuned in to the mosquitoes and often the threats they may pose, possibly because we hear so much in the press. But by late summer we have often become immune to the risk and the mosquitoes because we've been bitten so many times all summer and nothing has happened. But mosquito populations change over the course of a summer and species that weren't a problem in the spring are suddenly showing up. We know that some of the species that are best at carrying West Nile Virus are more active and more interactive with humans in the later summer season. So it likely becomes even more crucial in the late summer that we make an effort to keep ourselves arthropod pest free. Recognize that we do have a lot of mosquitoes active right now. Chigger numbers have usually dropped off by late summer, but this year they seem to be hanging in there based on the bites I'm still getting. You need to depend on permethrin based clothing treatments as well as DEET or picaridin based skin treatments. These products will also work well on reducing risk from ticks and chiggers. Homeopathic remedies as well as all sorts of plant extracts are not effective with the exception of oil of lemon eucalyptus. This product has been tested and found to be almost as effective as DEET and picaridin. As always, read and follow label directions for use, especially on children, and wash off skin as soon as you come indoors. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Bagworms

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Have I not been talking about bagworms like every week since late May? Yes I have. I talked about the importance of treating in June while they are small. I talked about looking for tiny little bagworms if plants were not looking normal. Yet what has been the number one question coming in to my office the past couple of weeks, when it's too late to expect effective control? Yup, bagworms. Now, let me first say that it is not uncommon for bagworms to be found on something other than junipers, cedars or spruces. Bagworms will feed on over 200 species of plants. Bagworms are so devastating on junipers and spruces because these species grow from the tips of the green out. If you remove all the green on a cedar tree branch, that branch is dead. If bagworms strip all the leaves off of a rose bush or a maple tree, those plants can generate new leaves almost any time in the growing season. Bagworms prefer junipers but if they've consumed most or all of the foliage on a juniper, they will start to move to other green plants. Small bagworms can silk or parachute in the wind and travel perhaps up to a quarter of a mile. But later in the season all they can do is crawl which means they are limited to plants within about 100 feet. They are pretty well through feeding now. They are likely pupating and are going to be tough to control. If you want to try, use a product with spinosad and of course use a hose end sprayer. But you will need to pull bags off this winter to remove potential eggs and then next year, on around June 10th and June 25th, plan to treat for bagworms. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

What Grass Should I Plant?

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I could spend hours talking about grass varieties to plant and how to select a good grass cultivar or blend, what not to buy, etc., but I only have two minutes. If you are planting grass in your yard this fall, and you need to do that in September, you want to look for two species of grass. Improved tall fescue is one and Kentucky bluegrass is the other. These two grasses are best adapted for most yards in Kansas. If you have a lot of area to seed you may want to consider K-31 tall fescue. BUT for the areas closest to your house or if you have a normal size yard then look for an improved tall fescue blend. Grain elevators and hardware stores usually have a good multi-cultivar improved tall fescue blends. Call me if you are having troubles finding one. Bluegrass is also often found as a blend. But here's what you need to do before you lay down a dollar for seed. Look at the contents tag, every bag has to have one. Look at the contents in that bag of seed. Many blends have all sorts of ryegrass or fescues other than tall fescue such as creeping red fescue. You want 100% bluegrass or tall fescue. The bag should have no noxious weeds (by law) and very few other weed seeds. The one to really look out for is other crop seed. You want this to be 0%. Other crop seed is usually a grass called orchard grass and if this gets in your yard you will curse the day you bought that seed. There's a lot of grass seed that is bought every year that should never be planted as it simply isn't adapted to our climate and will be very short lived. Start right by buying good seed! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Needles and leaf drop

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. By late summer we are starting to head into a season of change. One of the things that can happen, and I've been noticing it, is that trees will start losing leaves. This isn't the case of cooler temperatures have come along and leaves are changing color and falling in preparation for winter, kind of leaf drop. But it usually isn't anything to be worried about either. Many tree species, and so far I've seen it with hackberry, elm and ornamental pear, but it could be almost any species, have been hit hard with insect and or disease issues this summer. Some of the leaves are simply no longer photosynthetically functional and so leaves are being dropped so they won't be a burden on the rest of the tree. While this can be disconcerting, it really isn't. Perennial plants store up food reserves to get them through winter and growing in the spring. These food reserves are utilized in the spring when they first start growing and developing leaves and these reserves keep the plant going until enough leaf area is developed to provide adequate food. Once the plant crosses this magical threshold it starts to rebuild those food reserves. This happens very quickly and by mid August, the plant has a full tank of fuel to head into winter. Loss of leaves aren't a problem. You will also start to notice some pine trees developing yellow needles and dropping them. This is normal needle drop of the 2 to 4 year old needles. Don't worry. The time to worry, with any tree, is when the leaves die and then stay on the tree. This is not a good sign and you should call me for this! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.