

Soil Testing Gadgets

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I had a phone call from a homeowner the other day. They had some questions about potassium in the soil because their soil was high in potassium and they were concerned. I asked how they knew it was high and they said they'd bought a test kit or device, I wasn't sure which, and it showed them that their soil was high in potassium. Well, for starters most of those gadgets and little box kits where you match up color strips, are of questionable accuracy. I wouldn't waste money on them. There are some soil pH meters that aren't bad, but essentially if you are paying less than \$100 for something, I doubt that it is worth it! Even if they were accurate, would you know what to do with the information. The soil is high in potassium, compared to what? Does the soil tester kit tell you what "high" means or if it is even a problem? Our soils in most of Kansas, and certainly from here west, are high in potassium. That's a simple function of the origin of our soils and being in an increasingly arid climate. Soil test levels, from a real soil test, of over 240 ppm are considered adequate and no additional potassium fertilizer is required. In fact with many garden and field crops, or forages, levels of at least 160 ppm are often adequate. Our soils routinely are in the 4 and 500 ppm range. High levels of potassium are not a problem for plant growth anyway. Oh, if they were at several thousand ppm they might be, but this isn't an issue. Take home message is, if you want your soil tested, bring it in to the Extension Office. It'll cost \$15 and you'll get good information! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Late Season Crabgrass

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is the time of year that many people suddenly notice that they have a lot of grass in their lawn that isn't bluegrass and fescue. It's growing fast, it's starting to put up seedheads, it is suddenly starting to look paler and paler - it just isn't healthy looking. Whether you've figured it out yet or not, you have crabgrass and or foxtail. They are both summer annual grasses. They are getting late in their life cycle now, the days are getting shorter so they are very anxious to produce seed because they will die with the first hard freeze. If these grasses are a majority of what you see in your yard, you probably need to consider reseeding or overseeding this fall to get the tall fescue back to being the predominant grass. These grasses do not take over a yard and crowd out the fescue and bluegrass. They just can't do it. However, you as the turf manager may make it where you give an advantage to the summer annual grasses and this most commonly comes from mowing your cool season lawns too short. Anyway, we do have post emerge crabgrass killers that can help control crabgrass once it's growing. Quinclorac can control smaller crabgrass and at least suppress larger crabgrass. If you really want to control large crabgrass or foxtail though you need to look at using Bayer's Bermudagrass control for lawns or sometimes labeled crabgrass control for lawns. The active ingredient is fenoxyprop-p-ethyl. It stops growth of the crabgrass right now and will slowly kill it out. But you will still need to get more turf grass started in September to reduce the issue next year! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Pesticide Failures

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I always have to bite my tongue when a gardener or homeowner says that they sprayed an insect with a pesticide and it didn't die or they sprayed a herbicide on the weed and it didn't die. The comments that I hear are often something like, I must have gotten a bad batch of chemical. It's always the fault of the product, not the applicator. Okay, yes, sometimes chemicals are stored for too long and they do lose effectiveness. Or as in the case of some of the pigweeds, there is a genetic shift in the population and a weed that was controlled by a herbicide no longer is. But more commonly the problem is applicator error in one of many forms. A common one is to use the wrong pesticide. Much of this comes down to the homeowner not knowing what the problem truly was so they just tried something. They were getting funny spots on their rose leaves so they sprayed with Sevin. The problem was actually a disease and they needed a fungicide but Sevin is an insecticide. There was no way it would control the disease. Or they sprayed the weeds in their yard with 2,4-D and saw no control. Well, 2,4-D controls broadleaf weeds and their weed problem was crabgrass. Or it may be something as wild as having high pH water and the product they used had a short shelf life in high pH water. The spray container sat overnight and by the next day, the pesticide had been inactivated. The ways around this is to know what you are trying to control and then use the right product. Mix according to label directions. Use the right product for the right pest at the right time in the right way! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Green June Beetles or Japanese Beetles

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. The summer of 2017 may well be known as the summer of the beetles, and I'm not talking about the British singing group from the 1960s. We have had an abundance of beetles this year from the annoying ground beetles to hordes of June bugs to the unfortunate increase in Japanese beetles to the large and sometimes scary green June beetle. Over the past couple of weeks I have seen far more Japanese beetles than ever before AND evidence of their damage. I've also had far more questions about green June beetles than ever before. I'm hoping that the green June beetles are winding down as I didn't see as many in the past week but they will still be around until well into September. I think a lot of their activity was mating activity and egg laying activity as there were swarms flying low over lawns on several days. These aren't near the problem in lawns as other June beetles like the masked chafer, but standard grub control products will probably help reduce their numbers in future years. While they may look scary as they fly around, but they aren't really a threat. Japanese beetles are still a new enough pest we don't know for sure how long they will continue to feed into late summer. I was in Omaha about ten days ago and saw substantial feeding damage on linden trees. Most of the damage I've seen here has been very limited. Remember, these are a small green beetle, just under a half inch long, with brownish wing covers and along the back sides of its body it has a row of white dots. They feed on foliage so if leaves are turning brown and lacy, this is the problem. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Late Season Garden Planting

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Okay, we are heading into the last round of fall garden planting. We either have to go with really short season crops, like radishes, or crops with good cold weather and frost tolerance, like turnips. One way to extend the season, if you want to try a challenge, is to use floating row covers to help keep warm weather in at night and to keep frost off the leaves on this cooler mornings. Give me a call if you want more information on floating row covers. From now through mid-September we have a handful of crops that we can be planting, basically two root crops and two leafy crops. Radish and turnips are the root crops, spinach and leaf lettuce are the leafy crops. I already have my radish seed bought and will be planting some off and on between now and Labor Day. Once you get these in the ground, water them regularly, as in daily, until they are up out of the ground and growing well. Use a little side dress fertilizer after they've been out of the ground about 2 weeks. Once we move into October, however, we have another crop to plant, and that's garlic. Garlic needs to be planted from mid October to early November. It needs that cold weather treatment just like wheat does. I want to remind area gardeners that I am doing a garlic growing class on September 28th. It's a Thursday night, it'll run from 7 to about 8:30 and we'll be at the 4-H/Sr. Citizens Building. There is a \$25 registration fee but you'll get a very good book on garlic for that fee. To make sure I have enough materials please call the Extension Office at 238-4161 to register. You can pay at the door that night! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.