

What are meant by indeterminate tomatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Last week I was talking about determinate and indeterminate tomatoes. Of course someone asked me what the heck I was talking about. The traditional tomato plant started growing, and then started blooming and it just kept growing and blooming all summer long. Really, up until the time that they freeze, tomatoes are blooming and setting on. These are indeterminate. The plants can get huge, easily over six feet tall and require cages to keep them in control! Determinate tomatoes grow to a certain size, stop growing, produces a whole lot of blooms at once, set on a bunch of fruit and it is usually ready about all at the same time. Then they really don't produce much after that. These are often used in commercial production to minimize workers going through the field every few days, or to make utilization of mechanical harvesters. Determinate tomatoes are usually more compact plants that don't get nearly as big, allowing them to be planted closer together. If you are someone who likes to can a lot of tomatoes or wants to make a lot of salsa, then determinate varieties may be for you. Somewhere in between the two there is a third called, yup, semi-determinate. Semi-determinate varieties are somewhat more compact plants than indeterminate. Most of us are going to grow semi-determinate or indeterminate. We want tomatoes all season long. We may plant quite a few plants to get a large yield for canning or salsa, but truly, if you are someone who wants some tomatoes all season long, get some semi's or indeterminates and you'll be a happy gardener! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Catalpa Trees are often overlooked

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When we talk about trees to consider planting, we often overlook some very good possibilities. One of those, that may not get the respect it deserves, is catalpa. This is not a tree to put close to the house. Put it in the corner of the backyard but not overhanging a deck or a driveway. We are just west of the very limited native catalpa range. It's a coarse tree meaning it has huge leaves and not a lot of really fine branches like a maple or elm will have. It's a fast grower, averaging two feet a year and resultingly the wood isn't overly strong, another reason to keep it away from the house. It doesn't have many problems with diseases, but it can get infested in the last summer with catalpa worms which are in the sphinx moth family. These big old caterpillars will eat leaves and then drop off onto the ground - which is why you don't want it by your deck. BUT, fisherman love these caterpillars for fish bait and in the south, these trees are grown specifically to host this pest so they can harvest them and sell them as fish bait! But here's what I really like about catalpa trees. In the early summer, basically in June, they burst forth in bloom with huge panicles of large white blossoms with purple stripes running down the throat of the flower. From a distance, a catalpa in full bloom is just striking. There are areas on Ft Riley where there are still quite a few catalpa trees and when they are in full bloom, it is beautiful. They may be sort of tricky to find in the trade. You can try picking up the giant green bean fruits and planting the seeds out of them, but they are worth it! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Late winter lawn care

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. When we start getting towards the middle of February and we start to get some nice days with sunshine and temperatures in the 50's and 60's, homeowners and lawnaholics start getting the itch to do something in the yard. Well, the first thing NOT to do is don't get out the lawnmower. I know you want to get that brown dead grass off the lawn, but it just is too early for that. Regardless of the weather we have had, we could still get some nasty cold zero degree weather yet this winter and we need to leave that insulation on that lawn for a few more weeks. Likewise, core aeration and de-thatching probably shouldn't be done quite yet. Both of those practices this early could set up the lawn for some issues if we have a cold snap. Wait until early March. If you aren't going to dethatch or core aerate, you could apply your crabgrass preventer now IF you are using one of the long lasting products like Dimension or Barricade. Read the label as you may need to apply a heavier rate to make sure you make it through to September. These products will last that long, but you have to apply a slightly heavier rate. Now, if you did not get the broadleaf weeds sprayed last fall or you notice some new little weeds popping up, you can apply a broadleaf weed control product on sunny days when the temperatures are above 50 degrees. You need those two conditions to make sure those weed seedlings are actively growing so the herbicide will work. One word of caution though, if you need to do some reseeding or overseeding yet this spring, do not apply any herbicides of any kind! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Raise the ceiling or lower the floor

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Back when I was either in high school or college my mother and I enjoyed several chuckles reading a book that was sort of a collection of short stories of dealing with tropical plants. One of stories was called raise the ceiling or lower the floor and it was all about dealing with tropical foliage plants that had gotten out of control and just kept growing up and up and up. The easiest solution is to toss the plant out and buy a new one that is smaller. But sometimes the plant came from Aunt Becky and you've had it for 25 years and you just can't bear to part with it. With some plants, like dumb cane or Dieffenbachia, you can cut the plant down, root new shoots from the canes, and often get new shoots coming up from the original root stock. But for many other plants, like croton, dracaena, Norfolk Island Pine, rubber plant and Schefflera, you may need to do a technique known as air layering. I can provide more detailed instructions if you contact me at the office but basically in air layering, you're taking advantage of the plant's normal tendencies of the stem to root if it comes in contact with moist soil. You basically will remove any leaves from part of the stem - go higher than lower on the stem, slice the stem about an inch long and no more than halfway through the thickness of it, place part of a toothpick into this cut to hold it open so it can't heal. Then pack a baseball sized wad of moist sphagnum peat moss around and into to the wound, then wrap it all up with clear plastic wrap. Make sure the moss won't easily dry out seal it up and wait for roots to appear. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Poisonous Plants

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I am regularly asked by homeowners, especially parents of young children for a list of plants that might be poisonous so they can make sure that they don't have any in their yard or home. Unfortunately, there is a problem. We don't have a really good all inclusive list. There are certain plants that we know are poisonous. Some are deadly poisonous like nightshade and hemlock and some that are mildly poisonous like pokeweed and aloe. Part of the problem is that often, the lists that we put together are based some on known facts and some from historical literature and accounts. For decades, poinsettias were thought to be poisonous. Come to find out, they aren't. They may not taste good and the milky sap may cause some irritation, but they don't qualify as poisonous. Perhaps 80 years ago someone became very ill and they remembered eating some plant. All of a sudden, this is described in a report and then for 80 years, it's been showing up on every single poisonous plant list that exists. Then we have the whole issue of allergic reactions. Peanuts aren't considered poisonous, but I know people that eating even part of one peanut will land them in the emergency room. Poisonous plants is tough research. We don't have very many volunteers who will eat plants to see if they are poisonous. Chemical analysis isn't helpful unless you know what compound you're looking for. Common sense rules. Watch young children and be careful what they put in their mouths - if you want a list I'll give you one, but it's accuracy is questionable!

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