

Dormant Season Turf Seeding

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. While the best time to overseed and lawns and get those thin or bare spots filled in is fall, you still have a very narrow window of time when you can do some dormant seeding. I've had a mole get active in my yard last fall and over the winter so I've got some areas of bare soil that I was raking and leveling out over the weekend and getting some grass seed planted. Seeding when the ground is too cool to really have germination is called dormant seeding. In dormant seeding you are getting the grass seed into the ground so once we start to get a little moisture, we hope, and soil warms up, the grass seed is ready to sprout and grow. A really neat way to do this is to sprinkle grass seed on top of a light snowfall. The melting snow tends to pull the grass seed down to the soil surface and you are ready to go. It does work quite well, when you have snow. I decided not to wait any longer. One thing to keep in mind though is that you have to be careful doing this now to not mess things up with crabgrass preventers. Crabgrass preventers, for the most part, don't know the difference between crabgrass and lawn grass seed. It stops it all! There are a couple of exceptions. Tupersan can be used on brand new seedings before the lawn grass even germinates. It's fairly short acting though so you may need to follow up 6 to 8 weeks later with another product. Another option is dithiopyr, the active ingredient in Dimension. Dithiopyr can be applied to new seedings of tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass or ryegrass two weeks after the lawn grasses germinate, which may be about right. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Moles

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As I mentioned yesterday, I've had a mole in my yard since last fall. With the winter being so very mild, it seemed like every time the weather warmed up, I had new activity in my yard. Moles don't hibernate. They slow down, burrow deeper and get less active in colder weather, but they don't shut down completely. So if the weather warmed up, which would cause the soil and soil insects to warm up, they'd get active eating away. So here's the entire story on moles. There is no easy way to get rid of them. Most of the easy solutions that you've heard of, don't work. Chewing gum in the tunnels, whirly windmills in the yard, smoke bombs, water hoses, castor oil, none of this stuff really works. Some people have flooded out moles with water hoses, others have let them run for hours and never filled the hole or flushed out a mole. Trapping will work but it requires an incredible amount of dedication and a little bit of good luck. Some people will set up a lawn chair in the yard in the evening and sat down with a pitch fork in one hand and a beverage in the other and quietly waited for mole activity to be seen, whereupon they leap into action and try to harpoon the mole. It can work, but it may also require a lot of patience. Oft times the best thing to do is to just keep stomping down the tunnels. While they don't eat plant roots, they can leave air pockets that can cause damage to plants. Ultimately, the mole will eventually eat up all the food in your yard, consider it free grub control, and then move on to someone else's yard. Not perfect but it works! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Growing Blueberries

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Every year people call me up asking about how they can grow blueberries. So the first thing I ask them is if they are absolutely sure that they want to grow blueberries. If they respond yes, I say great, move to Michigan! And I'm not trying to be funny, I'm just trying to make the point that our soils and our climate are not really blueberry friendly. Blueberries need acid soil and by acid I mean down around a pH of 4.8 to 5.2. Many of our yards have a soil pH that is alkaline, a pH of 7 to 8. So you are first going to need a lot of soil amendments. Blueberries also do not have root hairs. Root hairs are the tiny little fibrous filaments growing off of roots. Root hairs are very efficient at gathering up water resources. Since blueberries don't have these, it becomes very important to mulch heavily and water regularly. You can't drown them like cranberries, but you can't let them dry out either. They will also need to be protected from the hot dry southwest winds of summer. They really do not like that. If you want to grow blueberries, you are asking for a ton of work and expense. Kansas is not a blueberry friendly region and you may be better off saving your money and just buying them at the store. If you still want to try to grow blueberries, and you don't really want to move to Michigan, then come by and visit with me. There are extensive and specific instructions for you to follow that I will be happy to provide to you. The easiest way may actually be to grow them in containers like half whisky barrels. But still you need to pick up the directions. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Iris Leaf Spot and Peony measles

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Two of the hardiest blooming perennials that we have in our area are peonies and bearded iris, sometimes known as flags. Both of these plants tolerate our high clay soils, hot weather and periodic droughts just fine. You can often find long abandoned rural homesteads by the presence of peonies or iris that may have crept into the ditch. Both of these plants are subject to fungal leaf spots. While they won't kill the plants, they can reduce blooms and simply make the foliage look pretty bad! These diseases overwinter on the dead material around the base of the plants. So, if you haven't already, the next few weeks is a good time to get this old foliage removed. Do not, I repeat DO NOT just set the mower down low and mow over these plants. It may make things look better but now you've only succeeded in chopping all the disease bearing leaf material up into really small pieces and scattered it all over everything. This won't do anything to stopping the disease. You need to carefully go in, cut off the vegetation at ground level and move it into the trash or a burn barrel, never into a compost pile. If you haven't noticed very much of either disease the past year or two then this may be all you need to do to keep the disease to a minimum. But, if you noticed a lot of the disease, then you need to start spraying with a fungicide as the new foliage emerges this spring. For iris leaf spot use chlorothalonil or myclobutanil. These may help on peonies or you may want to try good old mancozeb. Normally simply doing a good job of getting old plant material away will be enough. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Ladybugs, Round 2

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Last fall when you were all talking about those darn multicolored Asian Lady Beetles I told you to just keep your vacuum handy and be ready to suck them up. Once the weather cooled off they'd disappear until spring. Well, spring returned about mid February this year and every nice warm sunny day more and more of them are coming out of hibernation and flying towards the windows in your house. You see, right now, all they want to do is go outside. Seriously, if you open the windows, they will fly outside and be quite happy. But in some homes that's not easily done so you're back to using the vacuum cleaner. There really is no way to spray and control them right now. They are coming down out of the attic or up from basement. They are coming out from behind the drapes in some cases they are literally coming out of the woodwork. You would be stunned and horrified if you knew how many died in those out of the way places that you may never see. So there's no real way to deal with them other than vacuuming them out of the windows several days a week. But between now and next fall, you need to start slowly going around your house and caulking shut any tiny little crack or opening into your house because that's where they are getting in. Make sure that windows fit tight and weather stripping around doors is tight fitting. Then next fall, on those first days that you see them massing on the side of your house, attach the hose end sprayer and spray the foundation and lower walls of your house with a synthetic pyrethroid. It's not perfect but it will help! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.