

## Puncturevine Control

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 we were talking about sandbur control in lawns. Today I want to talk about the other plant that is sometimes called sandbur. It's also called goathead or sometimes Mexican Sandbur. The plant is actually puncturevine. Where sandbur is a grass with a pointy seed pod with lots of sharp spines, puncturevine is a broadleaf plant and the seed pod starts off as a cluster of four connected seeds but when they break off, they have essentially two longish sharp spines. These rascals are great at giving flat tires to bicycles - I speak from experience! Puncturevine is also an annual. Seeds are starting to sprout now and will continue to sprout on through most of the summer. They are going to be found in bare soil, even somewhat compacted bare soil. Crabgrass preventers can reduce how many plants get started but we always seem to have some break through. Where you have had them before you will have them again. The plant can get quite large, growing very flat with long vining branches shooting out in all directions. But those branches all come back to one central taproot. You want to treat this weed before it starts to bloom. The leaves are pinnately compound and it has cute little yellow flowers. If you've had a problem before, treat the area about every four weeks with a basic dandelion killer type of herbicide. If you are also fighting sandburs or crabgrass in the same area, look for one of the dandelion killers that also has crabgrass on the label. To minimize drift issues spray when the wind is calm and temperatures are below 80. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Carpenter Bees

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 started getting carpenter bee questions already this spring. Carpenter bees, sometimes called wood bees, are the large black and yellow bees that look a lot like bumblebees. Bumblebees have a yellow furry abdomen (last body segment) and carpenter bees have a shiny black abdomen. These are solitary bees. One female chews perfectly round holes in bare wood, constructs brood chambers off that entrance hole, and lays one egg at the bottom of the chamber and then fills it with food. When she is done she goes away and quietly spends the rest of her time feeding on nectar and pollen. If you get a lot of carpenter bees chewing into your deck or patio or out buildings, you can have a mess afterwhile. Then there's all the males that fly around an area where there are females. They are harmless as they don't have stingers, but they can be quite annoying. The best way to stop the females from excavating nesting chambers is to keep all wood surfaces painted. Wood stain doesn't work, only paint. But this is oft times not practical. If you can reach the excavation holes you can squirt in 5% sevin dust. Sevin also known as carbaryl, is highly toxic to bees and the female will pick up the insecticide and kill her. After a few weeks you can fill the holes with wood putty. But individual hole treatment may not be practical so liquid sprays of sevin, permethrin or cyfluthrin can be mixed up and applied as a soaking spray where the females are active. You may need to apply this every 2 to 3 weeks and do it several times during the summer. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Fertilizing Warm Season Grasses

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We, okay I, spend a lot of time talking about care of cool season lawn grasses because most people have fescue or bluegrass as their turfgrass.

Well, there is another group of lesser used grasses known as warm season grasses that often get the short end of the stick. This would include buffalograss, zoysia and Bermudagrass. These grasses start growing later in the spring, tend to enjoy the heat of summer so stay green better during the summer and then go dormant in the early autumn. The warm season turfgrasses have some advantages and disadvantages over cool season grasses. Neither one is perfect, it's just figuring out which works for you. One thing that is very different with warm season grasses is fertilization. You don't want to fertilize them in the fall because they are going dormant then. All you'll do is encourage weeds or undesirable grasses. Buffalograss should not be heavily fertilized as this will cause it to get weedy especially in wetter summers. Apply 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in early June. Some folks never fertilize their buffalograss but I feel it should be fertilized at least once every other year. Bermuda can use a lot of nitrogen and high quality stands will get a pound per month from May through August. I would try to fertilize the Bermuda at least twice during the summer 4 to 6 weeks apart sometime during May, June or July. Zoysia is in between the other two species. You don't want to over fertilize it as this can cause thatch, so I would treat it about like buffalo and apply 1 pound in early June and a half pound in early July. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Straw Bale Gardening

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Straw bale gardening has become the latest fad in gardening and can have some advantages, but also special challenges. If you want to try it, please stop by and pick up a bulletin I have here at the office as the bulletin has far more information in it than I can give in this program. What you don't want to do is just plop a bale down, and put a plant in it. To have a successful straw bale garden you really need to do some bale conditioning for about 2 weeks before planting. Now, keep in mind that we're talking straw bales here, the standard small bale, not brome, alfalfa or prairie hay. You can use a grass hay bale, but it has a lot more weed and grass seeds in it! You want to put the bale on edge so that the twine isn't touching the ground - this would cause natural fiber twine to rot. Then soak the bale down with water for three days. Once you soak it with water it will be heavy so make sure you have it where you want it before you start this process. The water will start the bale decomposing which is what you want. On days 4, 5, and 6 sprinkle a cup of urea or ammonium sulfate on top of the bale and water it in. This speeds up the decomposition. On days 7, 8 and 9 use a half cup of fertilizer. Now you are going to wait. By the time you get to about day 3 or 4 the bale should be warm as a result of the decomposition that is occurring. The temperature can get up over 100 degrees and you want to get it under 100 before planting any plants in it. Once you do plant, remember that the bale will dry quickly in Kansas weather so daily or twice daily watering may be needed! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Mulching Tomatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Mulching in gardens is a very good way to conserve soil moisture, when it's dry, and keep weed competition down, but it can also be a disaster if it is done improperly! Tomatoes seem to be the most critical crop for many home gardens so we're going to focus our talk there, but mulching can also be beneficial for other crops including beans and vine crops and can also help moderate soil temperatures if you are growing garlic! With tomatoes you want to wait until the ground warms up which it fortunately finally has. Straw and hay mulches are very common and are probably the best for all around mulching in the garden. Since these are dry you can apply a fairly thick layer, 3 to 4 inches. Make sure the mulch material is fairly well fluffed up before applying. Rainfall and gravity will settle it down fairly quickly. Some gardeners want to use grass clippings as mulch. This can work, but there are some precautions that you need to understand. First of all you need to spread the grass clipping out and get them dried down BEFORE you apply them as mulch. If you take wet clipping right out of the mower bagger and dump them in the garden you can create a thick moldy thatch layer that water will not be able to penetrate. Empty the bagger, spread the clippings around and turn them until they are well dry and then use them as mulch. Secondly, never collect clippings for the first three mowings after a herbicide treatment. And, if you used a crabgrass killer that contained quinclorac, DO NOT keep the clippings for mulch for at least one year. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.