

## Winterizing the Yard

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I heard an ad on the radio the other day for winterizing your yard. It was like if you didn't winterize your yard it would die over the winter. Okay, you do need to winterize your hoses and your in-ground sprinkler system if you have one. Unhook the hoses and drain them out. Drain your sprinkler lines and blow air through them or have your irrigation service technician do that. For the lawn itself, there's nothing that you HAVE to do. In fact you can ignore it and it will survive just fine. However, it will help your lawn come out of winter dormancy thicker and greener if you pay some attention to it now. I need to add that I'm only talking about cool season lawns like fescue and bluegrass. Warm season lawns like buffalograss, zoysia and Bermudagrass are basically long ago dormant and this won't help them at all. By applying fertilizer now, you are getting nutrients into the grass plant's system before it does dormant. It was once thought that we needed to add high phosphorus fertilizers late in the fall to do the lawn any good. But in reality, what the grass plant needs is nitrogen. IF you know that your lawn is low on phosphorus, then yes, apply a fertilizer with phosphorus. But unless you have a lawn in what used to be native pasture or cropland, it is unlikely that you'll be low in phosphorus. So just use your basic high nitrogen lawn fertilizer. Something with a formulation of 27-3-3 is a common lawn fertilizer and will work just fine! You don't need to water this in - you can wait for a rain or snowfall event. And once it's done, you're ready for winter! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Composition of Natural Fertilizers

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Some gardeners prefer to have natural or organic fertilizers on their garden. I'm fine with that although the plants don't really differentiate between natural and synthetic fertilizers. The nutrients ultimately all go through biochemical processes to get done to the elements that the plants need and can be taken up by the plants. But let's be honest - natural fertilizers don't have any magical powers and often have much lower essential nutrient content. In other words, you have to put a lot more on to get the same amount of nitrogen or phosphorus. The first thing that most gardeners think of when they hear natural fertilizers is manure. You should always avoid fresh manure as it can be high in salts as well as lower in nutrients. Dried cow manure, on average, is 1.3% nitrogen and .9% phosphorus. 100 pounds of dried cow manure has 1.3 pounds of nitrogen and just under 1 pound of phosphorus. That's the same amount of nitrogen that would be in 11 pounds of 12-12-12, a very common fertilizer. So if we are topdressing our garden with one pound per 1,000 square feet of nitrogen, we would need 1.1 pounds of fertilizer or 10 pounds of dried cow manure. There are other natural fertilizers and many of them are low analysis as well. Very few will have the levels of nutrients found in traditional or synthetic fertilizers. Any of them will work fine in your garden just be sure you are putting on enough to provide the needed nutrients and also know that they will generally not be as readily available, especially the nitrogen, as your traditional fertilizers. But they will work fine! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Lots of henbit this fall!

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Over the past month I've noticed a lot of little green plants growing in thin spots in my lawn as well as flower beds and vegetable gardens.

Apparently others have seen this as well as I've started to get questions and photos of this. The plant in question has a nice little scalloped edged leaves. The plants aren't going to get very big yet this fall, but parts of your yard or garden may be nearly carpeted with them. This is henbit.

Henbit is that plant that we see blooming early in the spring that has a pretty little K-State purple flower. We can often see it in crop fields and in the late afternoon sun it is just a purple haze of color. It may be beautiful in the fields, but not so much in your yard or garden. It was sprouting like gang busters about a month ago when we had some of those rains in early October. If you applied weed and feed to your yard prior to this, it isn't going to control it and that's why you are seeing it now. If it is in your yard, use a liquid lawn weed control product now. If you are seeing this in your garden, and assuming that everything you want out of your garden is gone or now dead from the frost, it would be better if you would spray with one of the glyphosate compounds.

These have no soil residual, which the lawn weed control products might have, so there's nothing to negatively impact garden plant growth early next spring. One note here, given some of the cooler weather, make sure that the temperature at application time is over 50 degrees and will be for a couple of hours after. We want those plants actively growing for best control opportunities. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Direct application of organic materials

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Fall is a great time to add organic matter to your garden. I have very rarely had a garden soil test come back that couldn't have used more organic matter. Organic matter is your garden's friend! It's organic matter that helps break apart those tiny pieces of clay allowing water to enter the soil more readily and roots to penetrate deeper. But when a lot of people think about soil organic matter they think of the pieces of roots and other parts of plants that are now under the soil surface. The true organic matter that does all the good stuff, is not what you can see, it's what you can't see at the microscopic level. It's the tiny pieces of organic matter that are so very crucial. But all that microscopic organic matter usually has to start as something bigger and we can often supplement soil with things like tree leaves, various forms of compost and even dried grass clippings that we till into the soil. If your tiller or plow can handle it, you can spread four to six inches of organic matter on the soil surface and then till it in. If your tiller won't handle 4 to 6 inches, then try a couple of inches. Microbes will start working on it this fall but that process will slow down as the soil cools down. Those microbes do need food to work and that food includes nutrients like nitrogen. In fact sometimes you can have short term nutrient tie up as the microbes gather up all the nitrogen they can to do their decomposition work. Eventually it will all be released but you may want to add a couple pounds of nitrogen fertilizer per 1,000 square feet before you till it up to help fuel the process. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

## Horseradish processing time

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 not a lot of garden plants I haven't tried to grow. Salsify or vegetable oyster is one, and horseradish is another. Now, I love horseradish and once established being a perennial, you can harvest some and let some stay in the ground for future years. Horseradish is normally harvested or dug, after a hard freeze kills the foliage. Dig up the bigger roots and keep the smaller pencil sized ones to replant or give to friends to plant. To process horseradish, wash the roots, peel and cut into sections. The rest of this you may want to do in the garage or outdoors. The potency of horseradish, a cousin to wasabi by the way, is found in the vapors coming off the product, hence the warning to do this outdoors. Use a food processor or blender to chop the roots up along with a small amount of water and a couple of ice cubes. The bite of the horseradish starts to develop immediately on processing. The intensity of the horseradish can be adjusted by adding vinegar or lemon juice to stop the process. When you open the food processor, make sure it is facing away from you, preferably with the wind at your back blowing the vapors away! You add 2 to 3 tablespoons per cup of horseradish, plus ½ teaspoon of salt, to arrest the process. If you add the vinegar or lemon juice immediately after processing you will have a very mild horseradish. If you wait several minutes you will have a very strong horseradish, or perhaps a very VERY strong horseradish. Store the ground horseradish in a tightly sealed jar in the refrigerator until ready for use. Then enjoy it! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.