

Gardening with Chuck Programs for August 17 - 23, 2020

Botryosphaeria canker of Oaks

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. You may have been noticing dead branch tips in certain oak trees over the past few weeks. I know my red oak on the farm has been showing this and I've gotten a few calls about it. Oaks in the red oak family, which include northern or southern red oak, pin oak, scarlet or crimson oak are subject to a twig dieback condition caused by Botryosphaeria canker. This is a fungal disease that attacks twigs towards the terminal ends, about 4 to 6 inches from the tips of the branches and makes a canker which is just a fancy name for a dead spot just under the bark. These cankers that are at the far end of the branches usually completely encircle the twig cutting off flow of nutrients to the leaves and the branch tip dies. While somewhat unsightly it causes such minor damage that fungicides simply aren't warranted. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Yellowjackets

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We have moved into the yellowjacket time of year and anyone working in their yard needs to be aware.

Yellowjackets are those slim honeybee looking wasps that like to try to get our food or sweet beverages at fall picnics. Yellowjackets nest generally in the ground. They start the year as a single queen. As the nest grows workers start to develop specialized roles and just about now nests are developing guard workers. You can be walking right by a nest all summer without a problem and then one day, bam, here come the guard bees after you. If you are out working be on the lookout for small bees/wasps flying back and forth low to the ground in an agitated fashion. Then start watching where they go into the ground. Mentally mark it, get some foaming wasp spray and spray it down after dark! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Selecting Quality Grass Seed, Part I

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. September is THE month to seed or overseed cool season lawns. If you are planting fescue, bluegrass or even ryegrass, September is the month to do it!! The first mistake that many homeowners make is in going to the store and buying any old grass seed. The problem that results from this is that many of the grass seed sold with names like shady spot turf or sunny spot contain grass varieties that simply aren't well suited to Kansas. Read the fine print on the seed label. It'll tell you what percent of various species of grass are in the mix. At least 90% of it should be tall fescue or Kentucky Bluegrass. It may have some other name associated with it. Avoid mixes that are predominantly annual ryegrass or rough bluegrass or creeping red fescue, etc. Buy good adapted seed and you'll be happier in the end! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Selecting Quality Grass Seed, Part II

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Yesterday I was talking about buying quality grass seed and that we want 90% of the seed in that to be a named tall fescue or Kentucky bluegrass cultivars. The other thing that I want you to pay attention to is the line that says Other Crop Seed. Anything that may be a crop that is a contaminant is included in this. When you see other crop seed don't think, corn or soybeans or wheat, but other types of grass and specifically orchardgrass. Orchardgrass is a common contaminant in cheap seed mixes and is the grass that is light green, is a sprawling open clump and grows faster than any other grass in your lawn. If you are looking at a seed blend that has more than about 0.1% other crop seed, put it back and keep looking. That small amount of seed can amount to hundreds of grass clumps you don't want in your yard! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Pear Harvest

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. People often talk about eating tree ripe fruit right off the tree and how wonderful it tastes. And I will agree with that if you are talking about apples, or peaches or cherries. But pears are a different beast. Sweet eating pears like Bartletts that are allowed to ripen on the tree develop these hard grit cells that are quite undesirable. Most pears are best if harvested while still firm and allowed to ripen off the tree to avoid developing these grit cells. A couple of things that I always look for on my pears is when the lenticels, or little white dots on the surface of the pear skin have corked over and turned brown. Also look for is how easy it is to lift up the fruit and twist it off. If it's ready to be picked it will come off easily. Lastly, if a pear is cut open and has that pear aroma, pick them and ripen them in the house! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.