Gardening With Chuck for August 11 - 17, 2014

Grubs and June Bugs

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 been seeing a lot of scarab beetles lately. Scarab beetles, more commonly known as May or June beetles, are the adult form of what we commonly call white grubs. These insects have a 1 to 3 year life cycle, depending on the species, although most species that damage lawns are annual. At this time of year the adults have finished laying eggs. The female finds nice areas of grass, burrows into the soil and lays eggs. These eggs are starting to hatch and the young grubs are going to eat a lot and develop rapidly. In fact, by mid to late September the grubs will have reached maximum size, the larvae will burrow deeper to remain dormant during the winter. In the spring they will move back closer to the surface and then pupate into an adult. People like me that don't water their lawn and let it go dormant in hot dry weather rarely have grub problems because my yard is not nearly as attractive to a female June beetle as is my neighbors heavily watered yard. Grub damage usually shows up as a sudden browning in parts of the yard. The grass is dying because the grubs have eaten off the roots. Turf in heavily infested lawns can just be rolled up like a carpet exposing the grubs underneath. If you see lots of birds pecking around in your yard or the aforementioned brown spots, then you probably need to treat for grubs. I do not recommend treating for grubs though unless you know you have a problem. When treating for grubs it is important to water in the material after application so that it gets washed down into the soil so the evil little root eaters will contact the chemical! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Dividing Iris

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We need to be looking at the weather forecast and finding a few days of nice weather in between the heat to do some necessary summer garden tasks. One task that is best done in the late summer is dividing or resetting bearded iris. Iris are well suited to Kansas and tend to multiply readily. In the late summer they are semi dormant so it's a good time to divide them, or move them. Carefully dig up the entire clump and remove the dirt. You want to look for thick rhizomes with a good fan of leaves. The ideal situation is to have two small rhizomes attached to a larger rhizome in a Y shape. Each of these rhizomes has a fan of leaves. Double fans will produce more flowers the first year, but single fans will catch up by the second year. Rhizomes that show insect infestation or soft rot should be discarded. Once you get all the rhizomes divided, cut the leaves back by two thirds. Then set these aside in a cool dry place where they won't dry out excessively while you get the bed prepared for replanting by removing weeds and grass and fertilizing. Add 1 pound of a 12-12-12 fertilizer per 100 square feet of bed and work into the soil. If you have been fertilizing heavily in recent years you may just skip fertilizing. When replanting, the tops of the rhizomes should be about even with the soil surface and then water the bed down well, possibly also adding a garden weed preventer. If your iris bed is really dry and hard, you may want to throughly water it down 4 or 5 days before attempting to dig the rhizomes to begin with. You should plan to divide your iris every 3 to 5 years. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

My Cucumber Got Crosspollinated

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Just about every year I'll get calls from people who's squash or cucumbers or peppers or something aren't quite what they expected. And all too often the gardener thinks that the plant got cross pollinated with something else. The truth of the matter is that other than sweet corn, the pollen source is going to make no difference to what the crop tastes like. If in fact true cross pollination occurred, it will only make a difference in the plant and crop that grows from the seed next year. So if your sweet peppers were cross pollinated with a jalapeno pepper, it won't make a difference until those seeds are grown out. The quality and characteristics of the fruit are dictated by the parents of the seed that you planted this spring. Most seed suppliers are very cautious and provide adequate separation of seed production fields just so that doesn't happen. But in the case of vine crops we have an even bigger thing going on. Many of the different vine crops are different species and so have different chromosome numbers making cross pollination biologically impossible. Cantaloupe can't cross pollinate watermelons because they have different numbers of chromosomes. Cucumbers can't cross pollinate your zucchini because they have different number of chromosomes. However, most squash species and pumpkins CAN cross pollinate because basically there are all in one big happy family. So, in theory a honeybee could visit your yellow crookneck squash and then carry pollen over to your giant pumpkin and cross pollinate it. But even if it did, this would become apparent, until next year! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK,

I’m Chuck Otte.