

Spider Mites

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Late summer, especially if there have been dry periods and/or hot weather, are the perfect environment that we need to get spider mite problems going. Spider mites are tiny little mites, not a true insect as they have eight legs not six, and we are often better off looking for their damage as the mites themselves are small and hard to see. Spider mites feed on the undersides of leaves and suck plant juices out of the leaves. The resulting damage at first causes a stippled or frosted appearance to the leaves, eventually killing the leaves. Turning the leaves over you may be able to see the little mites, often you can see the webbing that leads to the common name of spider mites. If you aren't sure that's what you have tap a leaf onto a piece of plain white paper. If you see tiny little dots land on the paper that start to move, you have spider mites! While tomatoes and beans seem to be a favorite food, they will feed on many plants. If you just have one or two plants, you can often keep the population under control by spraying water up under the leaves on a daily basis. They have a fast life cycle though so you need to do this daily or twice a day for a couple of weeks. Mites can be hard to control with pesticides. Since they are on the undersides of the leaves you have to spray up under the leaf to get to them. Insecticidal soaps can help but need to be reapplied about every 3 to 4 days. Unfortunately we don't have any good homeowner available insecticides for control of mites, in fact many garden insecticides kill the beneficial insects but not the mites, stick with the soap. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Snakes

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Hardly a week goes by during the summer that someone isn't asking me about how to keep snakes out of their yard. So here is the complete list of ways to keep snakes out of your yard.....yup, there are no guaranteed ways to keep snakes out of your yard. I know I'm trying to swim upstream here, but remember, snakes are a valuable part of the natural ecosystem and should be left alone to live and control pests.

Poisonous snakes around here are few and far between. Any time you encounter a snake, move slowly and avoid putting it in a defensive position and it will be happy to simply go away from you. Around the yard, keep vegetation mowed down. In the evening, snakes are going to go to areas of residual warmth so don't use decorative rock for ground cover. Reduce the use of ground cover plants that you don't mow as this gives them great areas to hide in. There aren't very many snake repellents out there. The ones that I've seen are usually a combination of aromatic oils, sulfur, corn starch, ground up granite and sawdust. While these products may have some effect on repelling snakes, or creating a barrier that snakes won't cross, you need to keep in mind that if you apply this at your fence line, and there are snakes already in the yard, you've just trapped them in the yard. If you wanted to keep snakes out of your air conditioner then put the barrier around the AC pad. If you wanted to keep them out of your house, put it around the foundation. Rainfall will make it necessary to repeat the application. But just remember, it doesn't work for all snakes! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Be Careful What You Plant

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Thanks to the internet I manage to get questions, literally from all over the world. But I get many of the same questions from locals also. The other day I received photos of some sort of rhizome or root part of a plant. No plant attached to it, just the root part. The person had been given this to them by a friend who said it grew fast and it would attract hummingbirds. At least they were asking BEFORE they planted it. Turned out it was a canna rhizome and wasn't going to be a problem. BUT, I've had people bring me in seeds that a friend somewhere else in the US or even outside the US had sent them to grow. Folks, DO NOT go shipping seeds around the country or around the world. First of all, in many cases it is illegal to do so. There are so many plant quarantines out there you could be breaking numerous laws. Diseases, insects and invasive plants are moved quickly around the world this way. A plant that is great for whatever reason in one part of the country, may not survive here, or worse yet, you may have a problem that there is no solution for. We've had enough problems with professional bringing in plants and insects that get out of hand - we don't need amateurs adding to that problem. Let me give you a few names of things that were introduced for the benefit of Americans and think about how that worked out: Asian lady beetles, kudzu, crownvetch, sericea lespedeza... do you want me to continue. If you want to try something exotic, purchase from a reputable local nursery. Find out what you want to plant and then whether you even should first! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Fall Lawn Seeding preparation

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. If you want to plant a new lawn or overseed an existing lawn the number one best time to do that is early September. The weather is starting to cool off but the soil is still warm so you can get those new grass seeds germinated and growing quickly and then give them a nice long autumn to get established so that they can survive winter. But to insure that you get a good start to your lawn, you need to plan ahead and not just go out the first Saturday in September and decide that today is the day you plant some grass seed. You need to start getting ready now. The first thing to do is to take a soil sample from the area you are going to seed. Take a trowel and gather soil from the top 2 to 3 inches in several places in your yard. We need a one pint sample for analysis. Bring it in to the Extension Office and we'll take it from there. This is important so we know if we need to adjust soil pH or need starter fertilizer. Next you need to decide if you are going to till up the yard and start from scratch or mow it low and just seed into the existing vegetation. You need to somehow get the seed into the soil, you can't just broadcast it over the surface, you have to get the seed into the soil.

Fortunately you can rent power seeders that do a great job of slicing the soil and dropping the seed down in. If you need to spread fertilizer you can do that before hand and the power seeder will put some of it in when you plant. One last thing - avoid using any weed killers of any kind between now and seeding. Some of these can cause germination problems or damage your young grass seedlings. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Late Season Bagworm Control

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Here's the way the phone call usually starts.

"Hey Chuck, I just got home from work last night and all of a sudden I've got bagworms on my junipers - I swear it had to have happened overnight!" First of all, it didn't just happen overnight - the bagworms have been there ever since the end of May. Bagworms can't travel very far, especially by this time of year. Bagworms this time of year can MAYBE crawl a hundred feet, but that's about it. Trust me, they've been there all summer long. At this point you need to decide what you are going to do. If, after close inspection, you see just a few bags, pull them off and smash them underfoot. However, you probably won't get them all and just one female bagworm bag left on the tree will be filled with several hundred bagworm eggs to hatch next year so mark your calendar for June 2017 to spray the plant, and surrounding junipers twice for bagworms. Now, if, however the tree or shrub is covered like lights on a Christmas tree, you have a problem. The bagworms are about through feeding and they are going to be very hard to control. I would still try to spray them just to help knock down the population even if it is just partial control. The only product I would use would be something containing spinosad. There are several homeowner products out there containing spinosad and it is a natural compound and very effective with bagworms. Use a hose end sprayer to apply a THOROUGH soaking spray. Don't use a pump up 2 gallon sprayer, it just won't do it. Then mark your calendar and spray again June 10 and 25 in 2017! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.