

Holiday Fruits

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I always joke that the biggest challenge for the holidays is what to do with the fruits and nuts, and I'm not talking about family members. Holiday fruit baskets are a popular gift. In some cases the fruit is gone in short order, but proper storage will stretch out how long it'll stay good. Unpack and separate the fruits. Tree fruits like apples, pears, grapefruit and oranges will store best at around 40 degrees either in the refrigerator or an attached unheated garage. Tropical fruits, except for those citrus fruits, and this includes bananas, need to be stored at room temperature and used fairly soon after receiving as they simply are more perishable with shorter storage life. The tree fruits and citrus fruits can usually be expected to store 3 to 4 weeks at that 40 degree range, without shriveling or losing crispness. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Holiday Nuts

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Yesterday it was holiday fruits, today it is holiday nuts! We often think of nuts as being long storage life produce but you need to remember that they are high in oils and oils can go rancid. If you've never bit into a nut that's gone rancid, you're lucky! While it's handy to have a nut bowl out where you have easy access, you're better off to keep the nuts in the refrigerator or freezer, either shelled or unshelled to reduce water loss. The more water that the nuts loses the more quickly they will go rancid. You can store them shelled or unshelled but shelled will take up less space. Put them in a plastic container with a tight fitting lid or a resealable plastic bag. This will keep them from absorbing flavors from other foods. While they will store in the freezer for up to a year, quality is best if they are used in six months. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

No Birds At Your Feeders

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I've had several people talk to me in recent weeks about a lack of birds at their feeders. What I can tell you, based on Christmas Bird Counts so far, is that the overall number of birds is down this year. Weather, both excessively dry and wet, will have a big impact on this. Drought decreases the amount of natural food supplies and will cause birds to move elsewhere to find food. Time of year and availability of natural foods will impact this as well. In some of that cold and snowy weather we had earlier, when natural foods were covered up, there were more birds at my feeders that then disappeared when the snow melted. There's a lot of winter to go yet and I suspect that all we'll need is another good snowstorm and the numbers will improve. So keep the feeders filled I'm sure you'll be seeing more soon! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Say Goodbye to the Christmas Tree

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. New Year's Day is a traditional day for many of us to take our Christmas trees down. If you had a real tree I hope you don't just throw it in the trash. My tree goes out by my birdfeeders to provide shelter and protection from weather and predators. Sometimes it's there for 2 or 3 years, ahem.. In past years the local fish and game organization has collected trees to take out to public lands to build wildlife brush piles or sink in the lake for fish habitat. Keep listening to the radio for their collection location. You can also cut the limbs off and use them to provide mulch and protection for more tender perennials. The main trunk can be used as a post. You can even burn the tree in a stove or fire pit. Just be advised that the resins in the sap are quite flammable and will create a lot of sparks, so not in the fireplace. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

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ONLY FOUR PROGRAMS THIS WEEK DUE TO CHRISTMAS

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