

Bagworms

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I had two photos sent to me last week of very small bagworms. The great irony is that in both cases the bagworms weren't on junipers or cedars, they were on apple trees. Two things to take away from this. Bagworms are starting to hatch and they will feed on almost any plant. It's still just a little bit early to go dashing out and spray your junipers for bagworms. We likely still have a lot of eggs to hatch. Added to that the fact that small bagworms don't eat a lot yet. I'd still wait until next week to spray known bagworm infested plants and then spray a second time two weeks later. If you have never seen bagworms on your junipers it doesn't mean you are out of the woods. Just keep an eye out for unusual foliage changes. Back to the bagworms on apple trees - bagworms will feed on over 200 species of plants. But I generally only worry about them on junipers and spruces because both of these species do not have the ability to generate new foliage in short order. If a juniper is defoliated, it's dead. They can't just up and sprout new foliage from dormant buds because they don't have any. Deciduous trees can be defoliated and generate new leaves fairly quickly. Young bagworms are only going to be a quarter inch long. When they first start feeding they can't even eat entire leaves, they just eat the leaf surface which leaves spots like it has a disease. If there's a few bagworms just pick them off and smash them. If you see a lot, just go ahead and spray them! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Clover Mites

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. People routinely ask me where I come up with the topics of these programs. This time of year, the answer is all of you! In the space of a couple of days last week I was asked about little red critters that were sometimes swarming over rocks or up the side of their house, one question came with a photo, one with a great description. These critters are small, probably less than a tenth of an inch long, but bright red. You can see them crawling on rocks, up the sides of house and sometimes right through screens and under closed windows into bathrooms and kitchens. If you smush one with your thumb you are guaranteed to leave a red smudge. These are clover mites. Clover mites are not a threat to human health. They feed primarily on grass plants and can overwinter in virtually any growth stage from egg to adult. They get busy feeding in the spring when temperatures start getting above 45 degrees. As long as the weather is nice and cool and the grass is growing lush they will probably stay in the lawn. But at some point in time, this year that's now, the weather becomes hot enough and dry enough that they leave the turf areas and start looking for places to hide during a summer hibernation, for lack of a better word. If they wander into your home, they are no risk and they'll soon die. You can slow down their entry by spraying lawn insecticides around the home and up onto the house. But the best thing to do is to ignore them and they'll soon go away for the summer! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Warm Season Grass Fertilization

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Warm season grasses are finally greening up and starting to grow. Warm season grasses are species like Buffalo, Zoysia and Bermudagrass. We treat these grasses differently because they grow from May through early September. Fall fertilization on them is a waste of time as they aren't growing in the fall. Buffalograss is very low maintenance and really should be fertilized lightly if at all. One standard application in May is all it needs. Excessive fertilization on buffalo, along with excessive rainfall or irrigation will simply cause it to be overtaken by weeds. Mow it high and rarely, fertilize it and water it about the same way! Zoysia and Bermuda are rapid growers and given abundant fertilizer and water will respond accordingly. I'd fertilize each of these once in May at a minimum. If they are irrigated or we have good rainfall, I'd also fertilize them a month later in June. If you really want to keep them growing aggressively, you can fertilize them once a month on into August with the standard 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. BUT, this management practice comes with a price. You will be mowing regularly. But if you're trying to get these grasses to fill in, keep fertilizing and watering. The other thing to keep in mind is that zoysia and Bermuda are prone to developing heavy thatch layers and problems will develop if you don't verticut these turfs every 4 to 6 years. If you only fertilize once a year you can wait longer but heavier fertilization requires verticutting! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Walnut Wilt

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Vegetable gardens need sunshine. A lot of sunshine as in at least 8 hours of full sun during the heart of summer. So trying to plant most vegetable gardens under a tree is a real gardening no-no. The shade alone is going to be a big problem not to mention the competition with tree roots for water and nutrients. But there's a group of trees that you really don't want to even have close to your garden. Any tree that is in the walnut family, most notably black walnut and pecan, produce and release into the soil a chemical called juglone. Juglone is formed in virtually all plant parts but noticeably the leaves and roots. Juglone is leached or released into the soil. Juglone is known to have fungicidal and insecticidal properties but it is also toxic to many plant species. When a plant has an ability to produce compounds that inhibit or stop the growth of other plants, it is called allelopathy. How much juglone is in the soil is directly related to how far you're away from the tree, but in general figure that you want to have your garden at least twice as far away from a tree as the longest branches. So what garden plants are sensitive to what we call walnut wilt? Why, everyone's favorite garden plant, tomatoes. Tomatoes and their cousins including potatoes, peppers and eggplant are all quite sensitive to juglone. If a walnut tree is close to your garden you can expect your tomatoes to wilt and often die in early summer. They won't always die, but they won't be productive! This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Remove Strawberry Blossoms

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Strawberries are one of the most reliable fruit plants that we can grow in Kansas and also one of the favorite homegrown fruits. So needless to say we get a lot of strawberries planted in Kansas gardens every year. But unlike many garden plants, you have to be patient if you want to have a long successful history with your strawberries. Too many people want to plant strawberries and have fruit right now! But they don't realize that you have to first build up a good strong plant. And to do this, you have to remove blossoms. Oh man that hurts, plucking off those blossoms that could be nice big red juicy strawberries. The problem is that if you plant strawberry plants and immediately let them start to produce fruit, they won't be nice and big. For June bearing strawberries you need to remove all of those blossoms the year of planting. The reason is that you need to build up the root system thereby helping the mother plant produce runners that will develop into strong and healthy daughter plants and these are the ones that produce the strawberries that you will enjoy next year. A little fertilizer a couple times through the year as well as periodic irrigation if it's dry will certainly help. If you planted everbearing strawberries, varieties like Ozark Beauty, Eversweet or Tribute, they are a little bit different. These should have blossoms and fruit removed for the first 4 to 6 weeks to get a good root system developed. After that time you can go ahead and let them set fruit. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.