

Gardening with Chuck Programs for February 4 - 10, 2019

Where Can I Get Seed of These AAS Winners

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. After nearly two weeks of my describing new vegetable and flower varieties some of you are wondering where the heck you can get seed or starts of these new cultivars. That can always be a challenge as they are new and everyone wants the newest and latest. Most of the large mail-order or online nurseries have at least some of these selections. For species that you would buy as a bedding plant from a nursery, sometimes it can take a couple of years for the nursery suppliers to get the new cultivars into production. New doesn't always sell really good and those seeds can be at a premium. But ask at your local nursery. If you want some of the latest cultivars, get started looking for seed now as supplies will be limited. If you are having problems finding the desired cultivars, give me a call and I'll help. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Will the cold weather reduce insect populations?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. With some rounds of cold weather this winter I inevitably hear the old, "well that ought to take care of some of those insects." While this sounds good in theory, the answer is basically, uh, NO. Some of our insect pests don't overwinter here. They blow in from the south every year. Others, like grasshoppers and bagworms, overwinter as eggs. These are usually very well insulated and are pretty darn indestructible unless physically damaged. The ones that overwinter as adults, larvae or even in a pupa of some form are very well adapted to our winter weather. Cold weather won't impact them. A lot of up and down weather with warm and then cold is actually harder on the insects, and us, than just getting cold and staying cold. If you think some of this cold weather will help with the insects, sorry, nope. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Standard, Semi-dwarf or Dwarf?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Homeowners often ask me if they should get dwarf, semi-dwarf or standard sized fruit trees. I generally discourage standard sized trees as they just get too big for many homeowners to properly manage. Dwarf trees sound like the best option to many homeowners but sadly dwarf trees have dwarf root systems and I've seen too many blow over in the summer. Semi-dwarf, while somewhat bigger, are a better choice for serious fruit production in Kansas. If you want to go with full dwarf trees be aware that there are risks. Semi-dwarfs can be kept fairly well in check at 10 to 12 feet tall with serious hard annual pruning, but you have to be ruthless and not tender hearted on this pruning. For more information on recommended fruit cultivars, planting or care of fruit trees, give me a call. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Graft or grow from seed?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. At least once a year someone will call me and ask about starting an apple tree from seed. They had a tree that was wonderful, OR they got an apple somewhere that was just amazing and they want one just like it. What I tell them, simply, is "don't waste your time." Apples are cross pollinated and the odds of getting an apple just like that or better from seed is about 1 in 80,000. If you have access to the tree then you can try to get cuttings off the parent tree and then graft these onto an existing tree or new rootstock. This isn't necessarily an easy thing, but it can be done and is rather fun especially when you make a successful graft. But you'll want to do some studying and preparation, get a grafting tool and some grafting tape. If you want more information on grafting trees and supplies, give me a call. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Vegetable Transplant Starting Dates

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Recently a friend from a neighboring county posted a photo on Facebook of her seed starting trays all loaded up, watered down and ready to start growing. The problem was, she had cold season crops, warm season crops and everything in between starting at the same time. So let's try to head some of these mistakes off from the start. If you want to grow your own transplants or starts of cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower or lettuce, for planting around March 30th, the recommended time frame, then start them now. For peppers, either sweet or hot, it doesn't matter, start them around March 16 for transplanting around May 11th. And for the ever popular tomatoes, plant them around March 23rd to have plants ready to transplant out in the garden on May 4th. I can understand the desire to get started, but be patient! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.