

Galls

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. It's the time of year when we may suddenly see all sorts of weird little growths on tree leaves. These little growths are usually bumps on the leaf and they are called galls. Galls are simply an abnormal growth caused most often by an insect but sometimes by a disease. They may look weird, and you may see a lot of them on some leaves, but they are rarely much more than a nuisance. An adult insect lays an egg on the leaf surface, or some other part of the plant, and the young larvae hatches out and starts feeding. Chemicals in the saliva of the small insect cause the plant to quickly develop the abnormal growth which frequently encloses the insect in a safe little place where it can feed until it becomes an adult. Since they are literally inside the leaf, there's no treatment, so don't worry! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Slime on the ground

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Given the weather we've had I'm sure quite a few of you have noticed a blackish to brownish gelatin like growth growing on the ground. It's most common shortly after it rains and may disappear or dry up to nothing a week or two after it rains. This is a form of blue green algae or more correctly, cyanobacterium, known as Nostoc commune. It is not toxic, it's been on the planet forever and it isn't killing out your grass. It will proliferate in areas where there is bare soil with no grass thereby giving the appearance that it has taken over and killed the grass, but they are secondary to some other management issues in the turf. The other thing you need to know about Nostoc is that there aren't any chemicals that will get rid of it. Try to till the areas up and get grass started this fall. And that's just about it! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Trees Are Looking Funky

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. There are a lot of trees out about the area that are looking quite funky right now. While it may be causing you concern, the important thing is to just sort of chill out and wait. We've had hail and wind storms, we've had heavy seed set, we've had beyond excessive rainfall, we've had leaf diseases and we've had gall insects. Any one of these things can cause tree leaf issues and basically make them look not quite right. In most cases, some warmer weather and sunshine will help turn the appearance of these trees around, but it may take a few weeks to generate new leaves so just be patient. However, if you have trees that are literally standing in water, and have been for over a week, there may be some problems. Some tree species can stand in water for months, others will be damaged after a few days. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Bacterial Wilt of Cucumbers

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Every year I will have gardeners bring me in withering and dying cucumber or muskmelon vines. The story is usually the same - they were fine two days ago and overnight they just wilted and started turning brown. This is a disease known as bacterial wilt. It is carried by cucumber beetles, it is transferred to the plant with just one bite and once the bacteria is inside the plant, there's nothing you can do. All you can do is to prevent cucumber beetles from feeding on your plants. Early in the season you can use row covers or cones to exclude the bugs. Unfortunately once the plants really start to vine out these won't work any longer and regular treatments will need to be started whether you see cucumber beetles or not. Spray with a garden insecticide that contains permethrin once a week. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Straw Bale Gardening

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Several years ago gardening in a bale of straw became all the rage. Will it work? Yes, but you can't just plant into a bale of straw the way it is. It takes about two weeks of conditioning to get the bale ready to be planted in to. This includes watering it and sprinkling fertilizer on it. You're basically getting the bale to start composting. Place the bale where it's easy to water it but gets full sun. The other concern with straw bale gardening in our climate is that if it isn't raining the bale needs to be watered regularly as it will dry out fairly quickly. Drip irrigation on a timer to apply water daily is one good option or a gallon plastic bottle with a hole in the bottom will work too. I do have a really good set of instructions from the fine folks in Washington State. Contact me if you'd like a copy of this information. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.