

Mowing Height

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If I were to choose one lawn maintenance issue that causes the most problems I think it would have to be mowing height. Mowing height impacts everything about the health of a lawn. Mow consistently too low and you will have weeds and a lot of them. The grass won't be vigorous and it won't look good. Our fescue and bluegrass lawns really need to be mowed at 3 to 3½ inches in height. The leaf blades on these grasses is very upright. We need that long leaf to produce food. We also need it to help shade the soil to keep it cooler and to reduce weed competition because the shaded ground grows fewer weeds. Contrary to what many people think, mowing it shorter doesn't reduce the time between mowing. Big changes in grass leaf height actually stresses the plant. Mow tall and let the grass thrive! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Mowing Wet Grass

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. When I was growing up my father had a rule that you never EVER mowed grass when it was wet. I think my father and many others of the era had a belief that you would damage the grass and spread diseases all over the place. In reality, you can mow grass, even in the rain, with no health effects from that alone. It's a pain to do and you have issues with bunchy grass clippings, but you can do it. However, even if the grass isn't wet wet, the excess rain has made the ground very soft and muddy. Riding mowers, especially zero turn mowers, can really tear up the sod. Riding mowers are also far heavier than you realize and can severely compact the soil especially if you follow the same path every mowing. So, when it's wet, mow easy. Consider using a push mower on small areas and no quick turns, ever! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fertilizing Warm Season Grasses

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Most of our lawn world around here is focused on tall fescue and bluegrass. But there are a few folks who appreciate and enjoy their warm season lawns of Bermudagrass, Zoysia or Buffalograss. These grasses have a totally different fertility schedule. Buffalograss isn't well adapted to our area and shouldn't be fertilized very heavily. Apply one treatment in early June and that's all. Bermuda and Zoysia can utilize more nitrogen fertilizer. I would treat both of these with one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet now and then again in early to mid July. And for Bermudagrass I would add another application in early August, but no later than August 15th. Remember that these grasses do all their growing in the summer months, unlike the fall and spring primary growth of fescue and bluegrass. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Sandbur Control

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I think the easiest way to sum up the growing season so far is, "well that hasn't gone as planned." None the less, if you have parts of your yard where you've been fighting grass sandburs, you know, the ones that gets burrs in your shoe laces and pant cuffs, then now is time for your first post-emerge treatment. Crabgrass preventers will help but not totally stop grass sandburs so we also use a series of followup over the top treatments with anything labeled as a crabgrass killer. Check the label to make sure it contains quinclorac or fenoxaprop-p-ethyl. Apply a good even spray over the area where you've had problems. Then repeat in early July and also early August. Seedlings can sprout and move to flowering quickly so the three treatments are necessary to stop the plants from making seed. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Side Dressing Fertilizer

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Nitrogen is one of the most important nutrients for plant growth and is also one of the most ephemeral. It moves readily in the soil water moving into the root zone with water and right on out the bottom of the root zone with excessive rainfall. Under saturated soil conditions, where all the oxygen in the soil is displaced by water it will rapidly undergo changes and be lost, most often, as nitrogen gas to the atmosphere. Haven't you ever wondered why our air is 78% nitrogen? What I'm trying to get at here is that the rain has made it tough to get vegetable and flower gardens planted. But for those crops and plants that are in the ground, it may be time to side-dress your gardens with some nitrogen fertilizer. Add about 1 to 1.5 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of garden. Just sprinkle it along the rows. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.