

Gardening with Chuck Programs for October 7 - 13, 2019

Do I Have to Rake the Leaves?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. One of the questions that I routinely get this time of year is whether homeowners HAVE to rake up the leaves. The answer sort of depends but a lot of times, no you don't. If you can get out regularly as the leaves start to fall and run over them with the lawn mower you can mulch them up and they'll just filter down and break down at the soil level. Where we get into problems is when leaves get matted down from rain or snow. Even a half inch layer of matted down leaves can start to smother out grass. I've had this happen before and it was a bigger problem with trees with small leaves than big leaves. You can also use your mower with bagger to remove the leaves but I'd rather recycle them. But if we have a big rain or wet snow, you may have to still rake those leaves off so it doesn't smother. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Crop Rotation

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Farmers rotate their crops and gardeners need to also. Disease and insect problems can build up when you plant the same crops in the same location year after year after year. Weeds can even become a big problem if you don't change things up a little bit. Small gardens sometimes limit us on what we can do and one of the crops where we have the most problems is tomatoes. In a perfect world we'd only plant tomatoes in the same location once every four years. We have diseases that can build up in the soil that can overwhelm the resistance in many of the cultivars. Rotation and sanitation (cleaning off the old tomato vines well each year) can also reduce that nasty septoria leaf blight and late blight that kills off leaves on our tomatoes every year from the bottom up. So rotate your garden for the plants sake! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Garlic Planting

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. While many gardeners are wrapping up their gardening year, others, like me, are just gearing up. Late October is the time to plant garlic. Most people try garlic once and are unhappy with how it does because they plant it in the spring and it doesn't do very much at all. Most garlic cultivars need to be planted in the fall so it can get well established and then get an early start in late winter. This early season growth before it gets too hot is crucial for a productive crop. Work your soil up when it isn't too wet. Don't break apart your garlic bulbs to cloves until just before you plant. Then plant your garlic so the top of the bulb is about an inch deep. Each plant needs about 45 square inches. I plant mine in rows one foot apart and 6 inches between bulbs. Also remember to plant the pointy end up. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Wrap Up That Grass Seeding

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We are screaming up rapidly on the middle of October. Soil temperatures have dropped a bunch in the past two weeks. If you haven't gotten your new grass seed in the ground already, this is probably a good time to stop, at least for a while. For the next couple of weeks newly planted seed would likely sprout, slowly but I'm afraid that it wouldn't get much growth especially develop enough of a root system to keep the small grass plant anchored in the ground through the winter and all the freeze thaw cycles. These up and down temperatures can push young plants right out of the ground where they'll dehydrate and die - not freeze to death, but dehydrate. If you have your seed already purchased though just hang on to it. Once it cools down a little more, assuming it's dry enough, you can do dormant seeding. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Bringing Plants Inside

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Many of us have plants that we overwinter in our houses. It isn't going to be too long, in fact the time is already upon us, that we need to bring these inside. Before you bring them inside, take some time to try to reduce the risk of bringing insects in with the plant. Insects that may be in the soil can be forced out by immersing the entire pot into a tub of lukewarm water for about 15 minutes. You can also treat the soil with garden insecticides. Insects that may be on the foliage can often be removed with a strong stream of water from the garden hose. Once you move your plants inside place them in a temperature appropriate location that is also the brightest sunlight in the house. Water through the winter when the soil is dry to the touch. And to keep from stressing the plants, don't fertilize until next spring! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.