

Gardening with Chuck Programs for September 30 - October 6, 2019

Too Early for Weed and Feed

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Even though we are rolling out of September and into October, and you may very well be seeing all sorts of little broadleaf weeds in your yard, it is still too early for weed and feed products on your lawn. The ground is still warm. It's cooling but still warm. Any rains in the next couple of weeks is just going to cause more weed seeds to germinate. If you've already applied your weed and feed, you probably got a pretty good control. But any more weeds that germinate are not going to be controlled by the weed and feed products. They need to be applied to growing weeds. I prefer to wait until after October 15th to apply weed and feed products and you can apply them, most years, clear into the first part of November. How long into November depends on the temperatures. But for now, let's not be in a hurry! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

The Myth of Elephant Garlic

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Everyone knows that I love growing garlic and I am routinely asked if I grow elephant garlic. Here's the myth busters side of me. Elephant garlic isn't garlic and no I don't grow it. It is a type of leek and has been mis-identified and mis-promoted for over a century. One of the ways to know that it isn't a true garlic is because it actually has a blossom. True garlic, *allium sativum* does not bloom. EG does produce very large garlic like cloves with a very mild garlic like flavor. It is more often planted in the spring like onions than in the fall like true garlic. If you do want to plant it in the fall, I would mulch it heavily. For true garlic however, it's time to start getting your garlic bed prepared. I like to plant garlic the last ten days of October so get your plot worked up now to settle down so it's ready in time! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Sweet Potato Harvest

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Because sweet potatoes are a tropical vine, they don't like cold weather and need to be harvested before it freezes. Which is fine because we should still have several weeks. Unlike many vegetables, the roots don't lose quality as they get bigger. To know if the roots are big enough for you, test dig one plant to evaluate. If they aren't big enough, wait another week or two. Sweet potatoes have tender skin and need to be cured 5 to 10 days in as warm a space as you can find, 85 to 90 is ideal and preferably with high humidity. This not only toughens up the skin but it also helps to start converting the starches to sugar, thereby improving the texture and flavor. Once the skins have toughened up after 10 or so days you can move them into storage. Remember, it's a tropical plant so store above 55 degrees. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Are Ornamental Safe to Eat?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We grow a lot of plants as ornamentals that are derived from edible plants. Think of flowering crabapples, ornamental sweet potato vine or ornamental peppers. Regularly I'll be asked if one can eat flowering crabapples, or the peppers from ornamental peppers or the roots from sweet potatoes. My answer is always, well, they aren't poisonous. But they may not be tasty. Flowering crabs are grown for their spring flowers. The apples are usually small and hard. Ornamental sweet potato vine is grown for its foliage. Roots may be small and rather tasteless. Ornamental peppers are often going to be quite hot, and may be unpredictably hot, or not at all. If you want to grow some of these crops for the food they can produce, then let's make some good selections with eating in my mind. But if you want to try, okay. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Preparing for Spring Planting

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. There are some plants that we can plant in the fall, but for many things, we need to plant them in the spring.

Gardens come to mind but so does fruit trees, asparagus and rhubarb. However, there is a lot that we can do yet this fall to get us ready to plant next spring. Get the garden cleared off and tilled up. A garden already tilled doesn't have to be quite as dry to get those peas and potatoes planted in March. Got the trench for your asparagus pre-dug so you are ready to get the crowns planted. Get a little mound built up for the rhubarb and incorporate a lot of rich organic matter into the soil now so it can mellow overwinter. Get your fruit tree planting sites worked up and organic matter incorporated into the soil so you can get those young fruit trees in the ground in early April. Plan ahead for success! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.