

### What Tomato Variety To Plant

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I am routinely asked what tomato variety people should plant which is a real challenge because there are currently over 1,500 cultivars of tomatoes available, at least as seed! So what do you want in a tomato which ultimately comes down to good production or big fruit. In tests during 2019 across Kansas including one location at St. Joe, Missouri, the most productive cultivar was Summerpick at nearly 11.5 pounds of tomatoes per plant. Good old Jet Star was right behind it at almost 11 pounds per plant followed by Ultrasonic, Mt. Gem and Beef Master all in that 9 to 10 pound per plant range. Now, if you want big fruit for slicing, Beef Master is still the king at over 10 ounces per fruit. That's a big tomato by the way. Mt Gem and Summerpick have nice sized fruit as well at a little over 7 ounces per fruit. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Fungus Gnats and Drain Flies

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. This is the time of year that we can start go get fungus gnats and drain flies. They are different species with different life cycles. Drain flies breed in the gunk that exists in many drains and are often found around kitchen windows and sinks. The best way to deal with these is with a big pot of boiling water poured down the sink. Fungus gnats look like mosquitoes, but they don't bite. The larvae or maggots live on small roots of house plants. You'll often find these mosquito looking little rascals hanging around the base of house plants flying out when you disturb them. Infested plants may suddenly start to wilt, show loss of vigor, poor growth and yellowing leaves. To control these little rascals look for a version of *Bacillus thuringiensis* sold as Gnatrol or Knock-Out Gnats. Read and follow the label. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Lower the Floor or Raise the Ceiling

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. My mother was a gardener and plant person just like me. I remember reading a book she had one time talking about house plants that had outgrown the house - the specific chapter was called lower the floor or raise the ceiling. If you do a good job with your houseplants, perhaps too good a job, you will run into a time when your plants have outgrown their space. The logical thing to do would be to toss it and buy a new smaller one, but oftentimes these plants have sentimental value. Fortunately, there are techniques whereby you can reduce the size of your plant and keep it around the house for another ten years. These techniques may be as simple as pruning or may be more involved like air layering. What you do depends on the type of the plant. If you need to reduce the size of a plant, call me for details. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Poisonous Plants

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Many plants that we may have in our homes or yards can be poisonous if different parts are eaten. Some can be mildly poisonous, some deathly poisonous. People with small children should be especially cautious about this, but certainly not to the point of not having any plants around. You simply need to be aware that toddlers may put anything in their mouths! The other challenge is that our knowledge of poisonous plants is probably not totally accurate because few people will volunteer to eat different plants to see if they are poisonous. Go figure! So again, simply be aware. Amazingly, simple things like the seeds of many of our common tree fruits can be poisonous especially in large quantities. I have a fairly extensive list of plants reported as poisonous. Feel free to call and ask for a copy. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Recommended Plants for Kansas

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Homeowners and gardeners in Kansas will try to grow almost any kind of plant you can imagine. Many of these plant species are not well suited for our area, but people want to buy them and try to grow them anyway. If you know the risk and don't mind losing the money, then that's all good. But many homeowners throw good money after bad trying to grow the wrong plant in the wrong place. We have a lot of resources available through the Extension Office to direct you in the right direction regardless of whether it's a shade tree, lawn grass, vegetable or flower variety. Make a list of the species or variety you are thinking about planting and then call me, drop the list by the office or email it to me. I'll be happy to look at it, tell you if there may not be a better option and give you other suggestions! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.