

Valentine's Day Flowers

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. So you got flowers for Valentine's Day. Hopefully they haven't already started to fade and wilt. There are several things that can help get the longest life and enjoyment out of those flowers. Keep the vase filled with water or the floral foam soaked. Add fresh warm water daily. If the water turns cloudy dump it and replace it. It may also help to recut stems removing one to two inches with a sharp knife. You'll get some disagreement on this but I feel you can use sharp scissors or pruning shears also, just always cut on an angle. Keep your flowers in a cool spot, preferably between 65 and 72 degrees away from direct sun, away from heating vents or out from under a ceiling fan. Let's face it - someone spent good money on those flowers, so take a little time to keep them watered and maximize your enjoyment. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Time to Prune Fruit Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Once we hit mid February it is time to start pruning fruit trees. While you can prune fruit trees well into spring it's easier to get it done before the buds on the trees start to swell. Once they start to swell they become easier to accidentally knock off. You want to prune when the temperature is above freezing. First of all it's more comfortable for you but secondly trying to prune frozen branches tends to cause more damage to the wood and leaves pruning wounds that don't heal so quickly. You want to prune to control the size of the tree, to open up the center of the tree to allow for more sunlight and make it easier to spray. Regular pruning also reduces the number of fruit that are set. You'll have fewer fruit but the fruit that you do have will be larger and usually of better quality. So get pruning soon! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Peach Leaf Curl Control

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Before we get any closer to spring it is time to treat your peach trees for peach leaf curl. Peach leaf curl is the disease that causes peach leaves to get all puckered up and distorted, turn red and yellow and then fall off. It is a fungus disease that attacks the leaves just as the buds break open. Once you see the symptoms you are months too late to do anything about it. You need to thoroughly spray the tree now, on a day when it's above 40 degrees, and will stay there for several hours, with a fungicide containing chlorothalonil that is labeled for peach trees. I like to spray twice about two weeks apart to make sure that you are getting good coverage of the entire tree but especially the buds on the smaller branches. If you are going to prune your peach tree do that first and then spray as it'll be easier to spray. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Canadian Dwarf Sour Cherries

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Of all our tree fruits, sour cherries are generally the most reliable bearing. Many people would rather have sweet cherries, but they are perhaps our least reliable of tree fruits. There is another option that can work very well for home orchards especially in small yards and those are bush cherries. A new option to our traditional Nanking cherries is Canadian Dwarf Sour Cherries. These are dwarf, 6 to 7 feet tall, very hardy and provide large yields of high quality fruit. They are also as much as 50% sweeter than other tart or sour cherries. There are currently four cultivars of Canadian Dwarf Sour Cherries: Romeo, Juliet, Carmine Jewel and Crimson Passion. It may take a little digging to find sources but they can be found mail order from firms like Gurney's, Stark Bros. and Michigan Bulb Co. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Scale Insects

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Scale insects are hard bodied sucking insects that don't look like insects. They may look like little paint drops on leaves and stems, they may look like little flat hard plates on branches. If you find something that looks suspect you can often just rub over them with your fingernail and they'll just scrape off. A few aren't a problem but if you find them totally covering leaves and stems you probably need to treat. While many species of plants can have scale insects we most often find them on fruit trees like apples and pears or on the common Manhattan Euonymous. Heavy infestations will kill branches and plants. If you think you have scales, bring some in to me to confirm. If treatment is needed then you want to apply a dormant oil by March 1st but make sure that the temperature is above 40 degrees when you treat. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.