

Gardening with Chuck Programs for June 29 - July 5, 2020

Fall Webworm

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I know it's only the start of summer, officially, but we are already seeing the first generation of Fall Webworm.

Fall webworms are those insects, caterpillars in fact, that make the big webby messy masses on the ends of tree branches. There are two generations per year. The first generation has pretty much finished feeding and are pupating into the adult moths. The adult moth is white with small black spots on the wings. These new adults will start emerging any day now and after mating the females will lay 400 to 500 eggs. While the webby masses at the ends of the branches are unsightly, they really don't harm the health of the tree. If you do spray you need to do so just as soon as you see the small webby masses. You either need to tear the webs open before spraying or use a high pressure sprayer. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Fescue and Bluegrass Water Use

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We know that the best grasses for our lawns are either going to be tall fescue or Kentucky bluegrass. Under low maintenance settings both grasses seem to survive long term drought just fine. But as the management level starts to increase, tall fescue tends to really shine as a more desirable turfgrass. Bluegrass goes dormant very quickly under summer temperatures and lack of rainfall. Tall fescue can often go for a month before it noticeably starts to go dormant. Under testing conditions at Manhattan tall fescue could go through an 83 day drought and recover just fine when rainfall returned. The older and more established the turfgrass stand is the more tolerance it is going to have. In this two year study the evaluation was done on stands that had been sodded in the spring. Seeded lawns will survive better! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Squash Vine Borer

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I had two hills of zucchini this spring that were growing fine and in 48 hours they were all wilted down and gone. This is the work of the squash vine borer. The adult moth very much resembles a wasp. Adults overwinter as pupae in the ground and the moth emerges in springs then flies around to find susceptible plants and lays eggs near the base of the plants. The young borer's hatch out, burrow into the stem and before long have severed enough of the stem that the plant dies. There is one generation per year and they should be wrapping up so I will plant a couple of new hills to replace the ones I lost. They'll get into almost any vine crop except cucumbers and melons. If you have a problem one year you'll likely have it the next so next year I'll start spraying the base of the plants as they emerge. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Dutch Elm Disease

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Our native American and Red, or Slippery Elms are gorgeous trees. They are still around but every year I see a few more die from Dutch Elm Disease or DED. DED is becoming very obvious right now and is easy to pick out by the branches that are dying back with many of the dead leaves staying on the branch. It often starts with a branch here or there in the canopy and then before the summer is over, or by early the following year, the entire tree is dead. There is a treatment that can be done to protect trees but it isn't a homeowner operation. It requires a trained arborist to inject the tree. It's expensive and has to be done every 2 or 3 years. It works, but you have to have a high value tree to justify it. Generally I just recommend that once a tree shows dying branches, prepare to get it removed soon! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Harvesting Onions

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Unlike garlic that you harvest while it still has a lot of green leaves, you harvest onions when about half the plants have fallen over. In fact once they start to fall over you can "walk down" the rest of them to the the process started. As you dig the onions don't leave them out in direct sunlight very long. Get them into some shade. They can be spread out on old window screens OR tied up in bundles of 10 to 12 and hung up in a warm dry place to dry down. You want the neck of the onion, that stem part right above the bulb, to be good and dry as this will maximize storage life. Once the necks are totally dry, which may take 2 to 3 weeks, trim the tops down to about an inch and the roots off to about a quarter of an inch. Store in mesh bags, not plastic bags, and keep in a cool dry location, but not the refrigerator. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.