

## Gardening with Chuck Programs for October 5 - 11, 2020

### Is Leaf Raking Mandatory

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.

## Bringing Plants Inside for Winter

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.

## Forcing Bulbs

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. About January or February many gardeners are thinking that they sure wish they had some blooms in the house to fight off spring fever. The problem is that by then, it's too late to do anything other than go out and buy something. Many of our spring flowering bulbs can be forced into bloom for a winter time splash of color in the house. There is a little bit of work involved but the big thing is that it takes anywhere from 8 to 16 weeks to get them into bloom stage depending on the species. You've got to plant them, get them watered and then give them weeks of cold treatment before they will trigger flower bud formation. I have excellent information on forcing bulbs but you need to get started on it pretty soon. Stop by the Extension Office or give us a call at 238-4161 to get the information on forcing bulbs. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Preventing Sunscald

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Every year I take phone calls from people who have a tree less than 15 years old that has all the bark on the south or southwest side of the lower trunk falling off and leave a cavity underneath. It is frequently, but not always, some thin barked species like maple or flowering crab. This is usually an injury caused by sunscald and the problem actually occurred several year before. The winter sun shines on the bark and heats it up so sap starts flowing and then it quickly cools down at night, the sap freezes and ruptures the vessels. The bark then dies and eventually sloughs off. To prevent this you want to get paper trunk wrap and in late October or early November wrap the trunk from the ground up to the first branches. This will help moderate the temperatures. Be sure to remove the wrap come March! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Soil Testing Lawns and Gardens

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. October and November is a good time, while you're out working in the lawn and garden, to pull a soil sample and bring it in to the Extension Office so we can send it off for analysis. Sometimes everything is fine, but it's good to know that, and other times we find all sorts of crazy things that may explain some of the problems you've been seeing. We need a one pint sample or roughly a plastic butter tub full . Take soil from several places in your yard or garden (don't combine a yard and garden tough) but make a composite sample, mix it up and bring it in. The test will cost about \$15 and we'll look at soil pH, organic matter, as well as levels of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. When the test come back I will send you the results as well as my recommendations. Be sure to tell us of any problems you've had! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.