

Gardening with Chuck Programs for September 28 - October 4, 2020

Get Ready To Wrap Up Grass Seeding

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Days are getting shorter and the air is cooling off and with that, so is the soil. We're getting to the time to get grass seeding and overseeding wrapped up. Our usual deadline is October 15th simply because after that it can turn off cold in very short order. Now, you can do dormant season planting with good success so what's the difference? In dormant seeding you put the seed in the ground after it's gotten too cold to germinate. We'll start that in about another 6 weeks. The biggest risk between now then isn't that plants will germinate and then freeze to death, but rather that they will experience frost heaving and get tossed out of the soil because they don't have an adequate root system to anchor them. Even if it gets real cold young grass doesn't actually freeze to death, but dry out and die from dessication. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Now That I Have Compost, What Do I Do With It

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. To be successful with anything it is often best to first decide the end result and then work backwards from there to the start. I know more than one home owner or gardener who has heard that a compost pile is a great thing to have and then they start one and suddenly they have a great supply of compost and no idea what to do with it. Most commonly we'll use compost to till into flower beds and vegetable gardens. By it's very nature it is high in organic matter and organic matter is the best fix for both heavy clay soils and light sandy soils. Apply as much as you can work into the top 3 to 6 inches. You can apply a thin layer to lawns for fertilizer but you need to be careful not to apply too much. Some people used compost as potting soil for containers. If you want to start a compost pile, ask me for directions! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Can I Eat Ornamental Sweet Potatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Over the past 25 years we've seen a big explosion in the use of ornamental sweet potato vines for landscaping. And they are right snappy looking! But then, just as people ask with flowering crabapples that set fruit homeowners want to know if they can eat the large fleshy roots that may have grown under the ornamental sweet potato vines. Well, they aren't poisonous if that's what you mean. But on the other hand, they may not necessarily taste the best. Just like any plant, plant breeders select plants for a specific purpose. In this case that purpose was ornamental foliage. Traditional sweet potatoes were selected from breeding programs for large roots with good flavor. Ornamental sweet potatoes may not even develop very large roots and those that they do develop may not be very sweet. But go ahead and try them! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Watering Small Trees

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. For the most part, right here in our immediate region we've been getting some fairly good and regular rains, but I am concerned about the coming weeks and the long range forecast . Heading into fall you may think that your trees, especially trees less than 5 or 10 years of age don't need any additional water but in fact they could be at risk. Until the leaves turn color or drop off they are still using some water. Start poking around in the soil at the base of that tree. If it's dry, give it a slow soaking at least one more time before winter. An even bigger concern though is any evergreen. They will continue to use water albeit less throughout the winter. If we go more than about three weeks with no rain at all you need to find a warm day and water the tree. And that's all evergreen trees regardless of size or age! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Keep Mowing Tall

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I've noticed that homeowners have conflicting points of view. The real lawnaholics want a lush deep green lawn but many of them also want to mow it short. I see it all the time. Yes folks, the weather is cooling off, but the days are getting shorter also which means less hours of daylight. Those fescue and bluegrass lawns need those 3 to 3½ inch long leaf blades now more than ever. Those long leaf blades not only provide maximum food for the grass plant but also help to shade the soil. The more shade the soil has the fewer weed seeds that can germinate. Now, the last time you mow the yard in November you can mow it shorter but don't scalp it. Drop it ½ to one inch but never go below 2 inches. The crowns of those grass plants still need protection and I'd rather you wait until spring for that short mow. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.