

## Velvet Ants

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Anyone who has spent much time in a garden or around landscape beds in the yard may have encountered a large orange and black fuzzy ant looking critter. This is a velvet ant. Velvet ants are actually a wasp. Females are flightless and the males have blue black wings flying low over the ground looking for females to mate with. Both the male and female feed on nectar and water. Velvet ants don't really have nests. The female runs around looking for ground nesting bee and wasp nests. When she finds one she'll enter it and lay one egg next to each brood chamber. The young larvae invade the brood chamber after hatching and feed on the bee larvae. Velvet ants have sometimes been called cow killers as the female does have a powerful sting if you annoy her. Like all male bees and wasps the male is stingless. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Picking Apples

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you have apple trees there is the eternal question of when to pick the apples. We tend to get anxious and even I was looking at my apple trees the other day wondering how much longer. There are some keys to look for. Flesh color will change from light green to white. Cut a thin slice out of the fruit and hold it up to the light to check it. Color of seeds for most cultivars will change from light green to brown as the fruit matures. The blossom or calyx end changes from green to a light yellow. Days from flowering can be a clue as well with Jonathan's coming in at 135 days, delicious 145 days and winesapp 155 days. With the cool May weather you may need to add a couple more weeks on to those! Ultimately it all comes down to flavor. Slice into an apple and see if it tastes sweet and mature. If it isn't mature yet it will taste starchy. Wind falls may be stored for a while and allowed to ripen. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Armyworms in Lawns and Gardens

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. If you've missed all the publicity just about everywhere, we have had a fairly significant fall armyworm infestation this year. Fall armyworms will get to about 1½ inches long at maturity can be green to brownish black with stripes along their body and an inverted Y on their head. They turn into a brownish moth that is often called a miller. They will eat almost anything but are fond of grass leaves. While they can temporarily turn a lawn brown they generally don't kill established lawns. Treatments of established lawns is rarely necessary so save your money. The armyworms eat off leaves and move on, marching like an army. The grass plants regrow and all is well other than a temporary discoloration. However, if you are planting a new lawn in the weeks ahead you need to be very alert and checking it daily. Armyworms can kill new grass. If a problem develops, treat it with spinosad! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Dividing Daylilies

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Daylilies are well adapted to Kansas growing conditions but under good growing conditions they need to be divided regularly to stay vigorous. While necessary this isn't for the faint of heart. You basically need to dig up each daylily clump with a spade and then put spading forks (a.k.a. potato forks) into it back to back and pull it apart and break it down to a clump about the size of a medium sized head of cauliflower or toss it on the lawn, get a garden hose to jet all the soil out and then start rolling it around until it separates into pieces. Occasionally, if it hasn't been too long since you planted your daylilies, you may be able to leave part of the clump in the soil and just carefully cleave off new starts from the edge. Once you have your divided pieces, replant them about 24 to 30 inches apart at the same depth they were, backfill, and water. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Transplanting Peonies

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Once we get into the first of September peonies are done for the season. Which means that they have stored up all the food reserves they need so the tops can be cut off and removed. Do not use a lawnmower for this. Just don't! But more importantly, the next couple of months are a great time to transplant peonies, or divide peonies or take some starts to give to family and friends. When you dig up a peony plant you'll find a massive crown and at times you just need to cut off some of the edges of the crown with an axe or shovel. You will notice buds or eyes on the side of the crown - it is from these buds that new growth will start next year. It is very important that these are planted 1 to 2 inches below the soil surface. If they are deeper, the plant will not bloom. If you have a plant that has slowed or stopped blooming, it likely needs to be dug up and reset so that these are about an inch deep. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.