

Clean Up Asparagus Beds

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Along with rhubarb, asparagus is one of our earliest garden vegetables. Since it is a perennial we need to get last year's growth all cleared off to facilitate this year's harvest. While there may be an inclination to also fertilize the bed right now, this does the asparagus no good and only encourages weeds that may start growing! Speaking of weeds, as long as there are no asparagus spears emerging you can spray the bed with glyphosate to kill any winter annuals or cool season grasses coming up in the bed. Just as soon as you do that you can also apply trifluralin weed preventer granules. Miracle-Gro weed preventer and Monterey vegetable and ornamental weeder both have asparagus on their label. Check other product labels as well. One thing not to do is to use salt to stop weeds. Not a good idea. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Using Manure in a Garden

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Manure is one of the oldest known fertilizers to man. For centuries it was about all humankind had to help crops grow. Today we can buy dried and bagged manure for our gardens and sometimes we have connections to a farmer and get manure from them. Keep a couple of things in mind. Fresh manure should always be allowed to sit in a pile for several months to compost down and mellow out. Fresh manure we sometimes call hot because it can burn plants and cause problems due to high salt content. So let it mellow or apply it in the fall and till it into the soil. The other thing to keep in mind is that manure is fairly low in nutrient content. Much of it is 2% or less nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Common garden fertilizers are 10% or more of these nutrients. Just know that you are going to have to use substantially more manure often to the tune of 20 pounds per 100 sq. ft.! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Star of Bethlehem

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Many lawns have clumps of what appears to be dark green thick bladed grass growing right now. Upon closer inspection each of those leaves will often have a whitish line going right down the center of that leaf blade. These clumps aren't grass but rather a spring flowering plant known as star of Bethlehem. It is a spring flowering bulb and eventually will come out with a nice little five petaled white flower. The small bulbs are often included in mixed bulb packages for homeowners. They plant it, it gets started and then creeps and crawls out of the flower bed! Being a bulb plant it is a little bit trickier to control. I have it in my lawn and tend to just leave it because after blooming it dies away. If you wish to control it I would recommend using the herbicide Speed Zone or Weed Free Zone. Mix it up according to label directions. Annual treatments will get it under control. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Too Early to Plant Flowers?

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Oh we gardeners are an impatient lot. We want spring and we want it right now! Okay, it is spring, but we aren't out of the woods yet when it comes to possible frosts and freezes. Just like with our vegetable gardens we need to be cautious about what flowers we plant early. Fortunately we do have several cold tolerant flowers, some can be direct seeded but many are best if we can find transplants to pop in the ground or pots outside our homes. Pansies are the classic early spring flower and can go by many common names and sizes of flowers. Look for anything labeled pansy, violets, viola or Johnny jump-ups. Other species to consider include phlox, cupflower, stock, any of the pinks of dianthus, dusty miller, ornamental kale or cabbage, snapdragons, sweet peas, larkspurs, bells of Ireland, sweet alyssum and bachelors buttons. Plant areas in full sun first or put the planted pots in full sun. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Onion Planting Time

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Late March through late April is onion planting time. If you want to grow nice big onions then get onion plants. Onion varieties are classified as short, intermediate or long day plants and that describes the conditions they need to start bulbing. We have found that intermediate day length cultivars do best in Kansas. Onion plants are always sold by name so you know what you're getting. Onion sets, which are the small bulbs you buy in bulk are essentially sold as one of three types, white, yellow or red, and you have no idea what you are getting. Which is fine for green onions. They can be left to grow into larger onions but you often have no idea what you'll get. Red Candy Apple, Candy (a yellow) and Super Star (a white) are all good cultivars to grow. Texas 1015Y is a Vidalia type onion but is short day length. They'll grow here but the bulbs won't be as big as if they were grown further south. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.