

Gardening with Chuck Programs for May 10 - 16, 2021

Hold Off on the Winter Squash

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Early spring doesn't want to give way just quite yet. You may want to hold on a few more days to plant your tomatoes if you haven't already. One thing that you don't want to be planting yet, and it has nothing to do with the current cool weather, are your winter squash. Winter squash are things like acorn and butternut squash, and you can probably include the small pumpkin cultivars too. The reason is actually very simple - These crops have fairly short seasons to maturity. If you wait until June, even late June, before you plant your winter squash the squash will be maturing just about the time that autumn starts in September. It also helps reduce the pressure from squash bugs. For all you zucchini and summer squash lovers, get your seeds planted. Then don't wait for squash bugs, start spraying early! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Get Vaccinated. Please!

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. It's been a long 14 or so months. I don't think anyone would have thought that we'd wind up at this point, but here we are. But we have something now that we didn't a year ago - it's called a vaccine. The quickest way that we are going to get back to normal is for a majority of the population to get vaccinated. Some of you are being resistant to getting the vaccine. You're waiting for herd immunity or something but we only get to herd immunity by getting more folks out there vaccinated. I've done my part. I've had both of my vaccinations, so has my wife. Even if you know you've had Covid or think you probably had Covid, getting vaccinated is still a good idea and will help boost your immunity. There's no cost to getting the vaccine. The virus is still out there. If you get sick from Covid, what might be the cost. Who'll take care of your kids, or your elderly parents? Get the shot! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Straw Bale Gardening

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. A few years ago the latest gardening fad came along - straw bale gardening. In theory it sounds great. Plop a bale down anywhere, stick some transplants in it, water and go. Truth of the matter is, it isn't quite that simple. Will it work? Yes. Is it all that simple? No. You need to make sure that you have a good fresh straw bale. Not alfalfa, not prairie or brome hay but straw. Then you have a process called bale conditioning that starts the straw breaking down so you can actually get plants to grow in them. The process is going to take at least 10 days and likely a couple of weeks to get to that point. The other thing you need to know is that in Kansas weather, you will need to water this thing every single day. If you want to try bale gardening give me a call or stop by the Extension Office and I'll get you the instructions on how to do it. But first you may want to make sure you can find some bales! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Storm Damage in Gardens

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Over half of our annual precipitation falls from May through August. Most of this is going to come in the form of thunderstorms. Thunderstorms can have wind, hail AND lightning. All of these can cause problems for plants in our yards and gardens. As soon as the storm is over many gardeners want to rush out and do something - anything, to help those poor garden plants. News flash - the best thing you can often do to help is to do nothing at all. The worst thing you can do is go right out after a storm to look and try to help. After heavy rains plants often are overfilled with water and become very brittle. Any attempt to move them around may result in them breaking. A lot of wind and hail damage the plants can grow out of with little impact. So when those storms come along, go look if you want to, but don't do anything for several days until the plants have had time to start to recover themselves! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Take Lightning Seriously

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. There is a line in a Jimmy Buffett song that goes, "You've got to taste the weather, you've got to touch the storm." If you grow up in the Great Plains those lines take on special meaning. I am fascinated by the weather. I hate ice either as hail or ice storms. Wind and tornadoes fascinate me. But lightning is one I don't mess around with. Lightning kills more often than anything else. We're well into severe thunderstorm season. There will be plenty of lightning to go around. I don't care if you're on your lawn tractor or on the golf course. If you start to see lightning and hear thunder, get yourself inside a sturdy structure. Don't find the nearest tree. Don't keep doing what you were doing, get your rear end in where it's safe. You aren't a chicken if you go inside and you aren't brave if you stay outside. I've seen lightning strikes explode big trees. Take some time to think what it might do to you! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.