

Gardening with Chuck Programs for November 22 - 28, 2021

Planting Amaryllis

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. We often talk about plants we can grow indoors to bring some color and fresh blooms to the winter indoors. We routinely think about forcing spring flowering bulbs, or using something like paper white narcissus that don't need a cold treatment. But another option we often overlook are Amaryllis. These large bulbs, often as big as a grapefruit, are fairly easy to grow, are well adapted to most of our homes normal winter time conditions, and result in very stunning and large blossoms. To have one blooming by the end of December, get started now. Plant one in a little potting soil in a pot only an inch or two bigger than the bulb, leaving half the bulb sticking out the top of the soil. I've seen some great looking bulbs for sale at nurseries and many other locations. If you've never tried one, give it a go this year! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Poinsettia Care

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Over the next few days or weeks, many people will be buying a poinsettia or poinsettias to bring some seasonal color into their homes. Here's a few things to keep in mind to maximize the life and enjoyment of that plant. Protect it from chilly winds on the way home. Always ask that it be wrapped if it's under 50 degrees - paper is better than plastic - and get the plant home and into your house as quickly as possible. Place it where it'll get some light but away from cold drafts or hot spots like near a furnace vent. If it is wrapped in that shiny foil, punch some holes in the bottom of the foil and set it on a saucer. Water when the soil is dry to the touch. If it stays too wet it'll get root rot and die, but if you let it wilt, even once, leaves will fall off making it ugly. Check the soil moisture every day to prevent this! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Don't Put Ashes on Gardens

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. One of the big mistakes that many gardeners make is to put wood ashes on their garden. Ashes have very little nutrient value, contrary to common opinion. More importantly, if you mix wood ashes with water, you will make lye. This is the first step in making homemade soap by the way. The thing about lye is that it is caustic, very basic, high pH. Add enough ashes to your garden and you will raise the pH. This is a problem because many of our soils around here are already high pH. They need sulfur to lower the pH, not ashes to raise it! Most of our garden and horticultural plants do grow better if the soil is slightly acidic. If, from a soil test, you know that you have an acidic garden soil, then you could add ashes to raise the pH. But in general, do not add ashes from the fireplace or wood stove to the garden. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Thanksgiving Day - No Program

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Caring for a Christmas Tree

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The day after Thanksgiving invariably seems to be the start of the Christmas tree buying and decorating season. More and more people are going back to buying real Christmas trees each year. To keep your tree as fresh as possible through the entire season the first step is to buy as fresh a tree as possible. Cutting your own at a Christmas tree farm is a good way to start but most folks buy from a tree lot. Give the tree a couple of good thumps on the ground to see if a lot of needles fall off then bend a couple of needles between your fingers. If they bend, that's good - if they snap like a match stick, that's bad. Just before putting the tree in the stand cutoff a half inch of the trunk to expose fresh vessels to take up water. Then get it in a stand, add fresh water and keep it full of water, checking it twice a day! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.