

## Gardening with Chuck Programs for August 29 - September 2, 2022

### Ornamental Sweet Potatoes

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. The same confusion that I was talking about last week with ornamental peppers and crabapples also occurs with ornamental sweet potatoes. The same things I said last week apply here as well. Ornamental sweet potatoes can produce enlarged roots just like culinary sweet potatoes. Yes, these are edible. However, once again, these particular cultivars were selected for their appealing foliage and not for the culinary quality of the roots. If you decide that you want to try them, treat them as you would culinary sweet potatoes. Dig the plants and collect the fleshy roots before the first freeze. Take them inside and let them cure at room temperature for a few weeks. Then be sure to store them at room temperature. Storing sweet potatoes at a chilled temperature can ruin them. Then try one of two just to check taste! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Harvesting Winter Squash

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Winter squash, things like acorn and butternut squash, are treated just about polar opposites of summer squash which includes yellow crooknecks and zucchini! Summer squash are generally harvested immature with small seeds, and have a fairly short shelf life. Winter squash are harvested at full maturity, the seeds are discarded and only the meat around the outside of the fruit is eaten. Here's a few keys to look for to determine maturity. The skin, or rind, should be thick, not easily punctured with your fingernail. Check skin color to make sure that skin color is correct - butternut should be a deep tan and acorn squash is a deep green. Another thing to check for on acorn squash is ground color. Where that squash rests on the ground should be orange. Storing at 55 to 60 degrees is ideal. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Get Ready for Grass Planting

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. September is THE preferred month to plant grass seed for new lawns. If you are wanting to plant some grass seed here's a few hints to remember. Use high quality grass seed with 0% crop of other kind. Till the ground and work the seed in or use a slit seeder to put the seed into direct soil contact. Make sure you use a starter fertilizer if you don't know what your soil phosphorus levels are. Low phosphorus causes new plants to literally just sit there and do nothing. The sooner in September you can plant the better. Don't use any weed control herbicides until the new grass has been mowed at proper height - which is 3 to 3½ inches - three times. Given the current weather patterns, it is best to water the new planting to get it up and going. But once you start watering, don't stop until it is established. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Be Kind and Patient With My Replacement

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I'm sure most of you have heard that I'm retiring, in just a few more days in fact. K-State and the Geary County Extension Council are in the process of sorting through applications and will interview candidates by the end of September. With a little good fortune a new agent can be in place by Thanksgiving. Now, that person will not be me. I obviously have no idea what their background will be. But please be patient with them. I was a far different agent in 1982 than I am today. I learned a lot along the way. The new agent will come along just fine as long as you give them a little time, space and support. It may be hard to realize but they will likely be a better agent than me in different areas. Take a little bit of time to get to know them and let them get to know you. Change is tough, but it'll be okay! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## It's Been A Pleasure

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Today is my last day. I become a retiree tomorrow. I feel so lucky to have been your ag extension agent for the past 40 years. I grew up gardening with my Mom, working a 40 fruit tree orchard with my Dad and at one time was even a horticulture major in college. My love of the outdoors probably came through loud and clear when I worked with all of you on your lawn, garden, natural area questions and problems. The joy that I had in working with all of you is the main reason that I stuck around for 40 years. It was just such a pleasure to go to work every day and be able to help all of you. I will miss all of that and regular interactions with you, but I'm still retiring. You'll see me around - I'm not moving away, it's just that now I'm going to spend a little more time with my own garden, so thank you! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.