

## Gardening with Chuck Programs for March 14 - 20, 2022

### Start Planting Garden

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. It is the middle of March - it's time to start planting garden, well, sort of. Sometimes our spring fever gets out of hand and gardeners wind up making a real mess. If your garden was tilled last fall, that will help you get an early start. But finally, now that we've had some precipitation we need to dry that surface soil out enough that it isn't muddy. Trying to work muddy soil creates clods and clods will haunt you all season long. If you didn't till your garden last fall you are now in for a bit of a wait while it dries down. Again, you DO NOT want to till up wet soil. You'll be fighting that all summer long. We have a really good chart that shows when to plant our different vegetable crops and when we can expect to harvest them. We are a long ways away from tomato planting time so let's just sit tight on those for now! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Rhubarb Requirements

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. From a nutrition point of view, rhubarb just doesn't really have a lot to offer. Some vitamin K1 is just about the only thing of much consequence, but I don't care! I love it! Rhubarb needs cold winters so that fits our area just fine, but it also wants well drained soils. It does not want wet feet or it'll die of root rot. Rhubarb also wants a fairly rich soil. What I recommend is that you have a small terrace or sort of a high area to plant rhubarb in. Till it deeply in the fall before planting and add as much compost or rotted manure, really just anything that would add a lot of organic matter and some nutrients. When you plant it mulch down with some kind of organic mulch to keep the weeds down. Weed preventers and rhubarb don't always agree so I don't recommend them. Keep it well watered but don't drown it. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Rhubarb Cultivars

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Some people are amazed at the number of rhubarb cultivars that are available. You want to plant known and named varieties. Ones recommended for Kansas include Canada Red, Crimson Red, McDonald and Valentine. If you know someone that has a well established plant you can dig up a crown and use an ax to cut the crowns into sections. Otherwise you'll most likely be buying crown pieces that have one or two buds on them. Plant them about one inch below the soil surface and firm the soil but don't make a depression. Don't harvest anything the first year, just a few stalks the second year and then start harvesting it more in the third year. Rhubarb will generate seed heads but don't start it from seed as this means the plants you grow will be more prone to also sending up seed stalks and you don't want that! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Cutting Back Ornamental Grasses

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. You can call them ornamental grasses, you can call them pampas grass or you can just call them that clump of big grass. Regardless, it's time to clean all that old dead vegetation out from last year. If you live out in the country and the grasses are away from buildings and the weather is allowing, and you have a burn permit, you can just set them on fire. Have a hose handy and very little wind. And a word of warning, these burn very fast and very hot. Don't be caught off guard. If fire isn't an option then get some twine, or better yet some of those elasticky bungee cords and wrap all the vegetation up tightly and then use a pruning shear, chain saw, just anything to cut that stuff off about 3 to 6 inches high. This dry vegetation is pretty sticky and itchy so wear long sleeves and stay upwind from the dust and debris! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

## Wide Row Garden Planting

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I think most of us grew up with garden plants being planted in a single row, then a gap of 18 to 36 inches and another row. The reason for this was to allow for easy hoeing and weeding to control those weeds. In the early season we don't have as much weed competition so we can use a concept called wide row planting for things like lettuce, radishes and spinach, short term crops. You basically have a seed bed 12 to 18 inches wide. You scatter the seeds across this whole area, tamp it down with the back of a hoe and then rake a little soil over the top of the seed. Usually a quarter of an inch is enough. As the plants emerge thin them out as needed usually 4 to 6 inches from other plants. Shading from this should reduce weed competition and allow you more production from limited spaces. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.