
ANIMAL PESTS IN THE GARDEN

HUMBER NURSERIES 'GREEN THUMB GUIDE'



CATS - DOGS - MICE - MOLES - GROUNDHOGS - PORCUPINE - SKUNKS RACCOONS - SQUIRRELS - DEER

Wherever you live in Ontario you are never far from wildlife; our well-treed residential areas have their own residential animal population. In Toronto the ravines and river valleys allow even deer to go right downtown. For the most part we are not responsible for the presence of these animals, although we may be called on to deal with them one way or another.



CATS AND DOGS

We are responsible for our domestic pets which must be trained to use a litter box or designated area for a latrine. When others are not as considerate, there are measures that you can take to dissuade cats and dogs from fouling your garden.



Products containing Methyl Nonyl Ketone or Denatonium Benzoate are available as pellets or granules and in a hand pump spray. This has been proven to be an effective deterrent when used in a shrub border or on structures such as gate posts, steps etc.

Damage to the lawn caused by dog urine can be treated with Granulated Gypsum; simply follow directions on the package. When cats are a nuisance we must always remember how valuable they are in controlling mice.

MICE AND MOLES

Most mouse damage in the garden happens in the winter. When other food sources are unavailable mice will gnaw the bark of trees and shrubs.

Euonymus shrubs (including Burning Bush) seem to be particularly vulnerable, as are young trees (including fruit trees). These should be sprayed with SKOOT before winter along with mouse bait (consider the risks to pets and children when using poisons) to reduce populations. Small caliper trees should be protected by the use of a spiral white plastic guard or other wrap. Mousetraps and mouse bait are also available at Humber Nurseries.



Moles eat insects and are beneficial to the gardener, but they will sometimes tunnel under lawns to get to these insects. To get rid of moles you must get rid of the insects. Use beneficial insects or nematodes to control these insect populations.

SKUNKS AND RACCOONS

Skunks and raccoons are clever creatures that will eat almost anything, including your fruits and berries. They can also damage your lawn when digging for grubs. Raccoons will feed on fish in your pond if not prevented by netting, screening or a product which sprays the animal with water to deter it. Havahart humane traps can be used and are available at Humber Nurseries. Getting raccoons out of an attic is best left to people with experience.



You can also use a deterrent, such as Scent-A-Gone, which is a granular form of hot pepper.

Take care when using this product as it is meant to cause irritation. Wear gloves, wash your hands after use and consider the effects on your own pets.



BIRDS

For those who grow fruits and berries, birds can be a difficult pest to deal with. They will frequently steal your cherries, mulberries, etc., before you have a chance to harvest them. The best preventative measure you can take is covering the tree or shrub with bird netting, available at Humber Nurseries in various sizes. You can also tie on ribbons that blow in the wind or use plastic owls. These are less effective because birds learn that they are harmless. For windowsills, eaves, ledges or roofs try the Super Hunter Bird Repellent. It applies like caulking on flat surfaces, and it remains tacky and discourages them from roosting or returning.

SQUIRRELS AND RABBITS

Rabbits can be kept out by chain link fencing or chicken wire, in particular when you may need to protect a vegetable garden.

Blood Meal (which is also a fertilizer) can be used as a repellent. SKOOT should be applied to the lower branches of vulnerable trees and shrubs and plastic or other wrap can be put on tree trunks to protect them from rabbits in the winter. Remember that deep snow can raise the animal above the zone you have wrapped. You may have to wrap as high as the lower branches.

Squirrels are persistent and difficult to deter, but the repellents mentioned above may work. If the squirrel digs up your newly planted bulbs, place chicken wire over them and bury it with a little more soil or hide it with mulch. Adding hen manure to the soil when planting bulbs may also deter squirrels. Squirrels are unlikely to relish daffodils but do enjoy tulips.



WHITE TAILED DEER

Deer are more of a problem in rural areas, but they do venture as far as farm fields close to the city and even further traveling along the river valleys.

Fencing is always an answer, but even then it may not prove to be enough as deer are powerful and agile and can clear an eight-foot fence. An alternative solution would be an electric fence that animals soon learn to avoid.

Some home remedies for repelling deer include spreading blood meal, hanging nylon stockings stuffed with human hair and even the use of mothballs. Deer use their white tail to flash a danger signal to others that sets them fleeing. Cutting a white plastic grocery bag in two – each part with a handle – and hanging them at deer eye-level on fence posts or trees and shrubs could prove to be the cheapest, and if effective, the most elegantly simple solution to the problem.

DEER AWAY is a brand of spray based on whole egg solids for application to vulnerable plants (SKOOT can also be effective).

GROUNDHOGS AND PORCUPINES

Even a low fence can keep groundhogs out of your vegetable garden and otherwise they are rarely a pest.

You might never see porcupines but they are there, certainly in rural areas and suburbs. They feed high on the tree (usually conifers) by gnawing the bark and thus killing the top of the tree. When their presence has been noted you may wish to hire professional animal control specialist to remove them, if you would rather not tackle the job or your efforts have been unsuccessful.



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