



HOME & GARDEN

Home and Garden information center • 12005 Homewood Road • Ellicott City, MD 21042 • 1-800-342-2507

May 2009

Wildlife Tips

OCCURRENCES:

- Check with your county health department before live trapping wildlife pests like squirrels, groundhogs, skunks and raccoons. You cannot move most of these to a park or nearby field. Call the USDA wildlife service at 1-800-442-0708 for more information.
- Squirrels will come to eat the bird food you put out even when your bird feeders are advertised as “squirrel-proof”. Squirrels quickly become tolerant to the hot pepper repellent added to some bird feeds. Learn to live with visiting squirrels or offer them alternate food like ears of feed corn.
- Snakes, turtles and toads are all very active by now. These are all very beneficial creatures. They are very sensitive to pollutants such as pesticides and their presence in the landscape is a sign of a healthy environment. Snakes are not tolerated well by many people; they are very beneficial and are harmless. The common snakes you will see in your yard are the Eastern Garter, Northern brown snake, Ring Neck snake and the black rat snake. Snakes should not be harmed. To learn more about them ask for HGIC Fact Sheet # 64.
- Moles and voles are active. Moles are attracted to areas that have a high population of soil grubs and earthworms; they do not feed on plants. Moles can be controlled by collapsing tunnels or installing harpoon traps in new runways. Voles feed on plant material. You can control them with snap traps baited with apples.
- Rabbits can be a nuisance in flower and vegetable gardens, feeding on young and tender plants. They can be excluded with a low, 2 ft. high fence that is secured to the ground. You can also repel them with commercial repellents, blood meal, or by sprinkling hot pepper flakes around plants.
- Keep bird feeders and bird baths clean and provide your wild birds with fresh water. Remove bird nests attached to your house after the birds have left to prevent problems with bird mites coming into your home. These small mites do bite people. Bird nests may also be found in rain gutters, and chimneys. IF you have problems with birds, try hanging aluminum pie pans or computer CDs by hanging them in the landscape. The reflective surfaces help to deter pesky birds.
- Woodpeckers may be heard tapping on wooden structures. This may be territorial behavior or active searching for insects. They prefer soft woods like cedar. Dissuade persistent woodpeckers by tacking up some hardware cloth over the area.
- Where deer are feeding on garden and landscape plants, apply a repellent, such as “Deer-Away”, “Hinder” or “Ro-Pel” to vulnerable plants. If deer pressure is heavy, try rotating repellents. A new systemic product called Repellex is now available. Small deodorant soap bars have been used with some success.
- Polywire fencing connected to an inexpensive, solar-powered charger can successfully exclude groundhogs and deer.
- Those jelly-like masses you see in your pond are frog, toad or in some cases salamander egg masses. They should be hatching out by now producing hundreds of tiny tadpoles (frogs and toads) and (nymphs) if they are salamander eggs. Don’t disturb them. You can begin feeding your fish now.

Educating People To Help Themselves

Local Governments - U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

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NUISANCE:

- The USDA, APHIS, Wildlife Services program has a cooperative agreement with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Heritage Division, to provide the residents of Maryland with information on how to deal with nuisance wild animals. The program operates a toll-free Nuisance Wildlife Information Line: 877-463-6497. Normal working hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. People calling after hours, or on weekends and holidays, may leave a message on the answering machine and calls will be returned during the next work day.
- Squirrels will come to eat the bird food you put out even when your bird feeders are advertised as “squirrel-proof”. To keep squirrels from robbing seed from feeders place a cover (baffle) over tube feeders or place a baffle on a post under the feeder. Keep feeders at least 15 feet from the house and vegetation so squirrels cannot jump onto the feeders.
- Store bird food in secure containers with lids to keep squirrels and other rodents out. Squirrels can gnaw through plastic trashcan lids.
- Squirrels feed on tender new plant growth and dig up seeds, flowers, and bulbs in search of food. Discourage squirrels by removing access to food sources such as bird feeders. Rotate the use of commercial repellents. Protect individual or small groups of plants with a fine mesh netting or a floating row cover. To deter digging sprinkle crushed oyster shells over the surface of the garden. You can protect newly planted bulbs with a piece of one inch mesh chicken wire extending at least a foot beyond the edge of the bed and mulch.
- Moles and voles are active. Moles create raised tunnels in lawns. Control by tamping down tunnels with your foot whenever they appear. Moles do not necessarily indicate a white grub problem. They feed on a wide range of soil critters including earthworms. Voles create tunnels underground that are not raised. Look for entrance holes about 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Sometimes tunnels are shallow and are open along the soil surface. Voles feed on plant material such as roots, bark, or the entire plant. Where voles are a problem try using mouse snap traps baited with apples or peanut butter. Cover with a shingle or piece of wood to increase effectiveness
- Rabbits can be a nuisance in flower and vegetable gardens, feeding on young and tender plants. They can be excluded with a low, 2 ft. high fence that is secured to the ground. You can also repel them with commercial repellents, blood meal, or by sprinkling hot pepper flakes around plants.
- Keep bird feeders and bird baths clean and provide your wild birds with fresh water. Remove bird nests attached to your house after the birds have left to prevent problems with bird mites coming into your home. These small mites do bite people. Bird nests may also be found in rain gutters, and chimneys. IF you have problems with birds, recycle aluminum pie plants and computer CDs by hanging them in the landscape. The reflective surfaces help to deter pesky birds.
- Woodpeckers may be heard tapping on wooden structures. This may be territorial behavior or active searching for insects. They prefer soft woods like cedar. Dissuade persistent woodpeckers by tacking up some hardware cloth over the area. Small trees may be protected from wood pecker damage by draping nylon netting over the canopy and trunk. Protect branches and trunks of larger trees by loosely wrapping ¼ inch hardware cloth or burlap around them.
- Where deer are feeding on garden and landscape plants, apply a repellent, such as “Deer-Away”, “Liquid Fence,” “Hinder” or “Ro-Pel” to vulnerable plants. If deer pressure is heavy, try rotating repellents. Small deodorant soap bars have been used with some success. Polywire fencing connected to an inexpensive, solar-powered charger can successfully exclude deer. Grow plants seldom damaged by deer. See FS 655 Deer Resistant Ornamentals

Have a pest or gardening question?

Call the Home and Garden Information Center

800-342-2507 www.hgic.umd.edu