

Rabbit Trouble?

Stuffed rabbits are a kid's favorite huggable. Cartoon rabbits are 'Wascally' and adorable. Greeting card bunnies are sometimes just too cute for words. Even the Easter Bunny is a revered icon in American life. And in real life, rabbits are pretty lovable critters, too — soft, fuzzy, cute as, well, a bunny— until you spot one munching your precious (and expensive!) landscape plantings. (Think Peter Rabbit and Mr. McGregor.)

Before you resort to drastic measures, read these words of advice from Scott R. Craven, Extension Wildlife Specialist of the University of Wisconsin, in Madison. It is possible to "peacefully coexist" with rabbits.

Know Your Enemy

How do you spot rabbit damage? It's cleanly cut rather than torn away. Deer damage, on the other hand, has a jagged appearance.

Eastern cottontail rabbits feed just before sunrise and just after sunset, but they may also be active during the day. The Eastern Cottontail is the most common type of rabbit in this area.

Rabbits like to eat a variety of plants, especially those that are young, tender, and green. Many customers complain of rabbits eating their pansies, petunias, clematis, lettuce, and phlox. There are a few plants which have been said to repel rabbits, but we haven't found solid research to back up that claim. These plants include rosemary, dusty miller, marigolds, daffodils, lemon grass, garlic, peppers, and ornamental strawberries. It may be worth a try to edge your area with some of these plants.

Rabbit Resistant Plants:

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|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Vegetables | Angelonia | Blanket flower (Gaillardia) |
| Artichokes | Artemisia | Bleeding heart (Dicentra) |
| Asparagus | Astilbe | Blue mist shrub (Caryopteris x clandonensis) |
| Onions | Autumn Fern | Blue star (Amsonia hubrichtii) |
| Peppers (protect as seedlings) | Azalea | Butterfly Bush (Buddleia spp.) |
| Potatoes | Balloon flower (Platycodon grandiflorus) | Butterfly weed (Asclepias tuberosa) |
| Squash | Barrenwort (Epimedium) | Canna |
| Tomatoes | Basil | Candytuft (Iberis) |
| Cucumbers | Beard tongue (Penstemon) | Carex |
| Corn | Bee balm (Monarda) | Catmint (Nepeta) |
| | Begonia | Columbine (Aquilegia) |
| Annuals & Perennials | Betony (Stachys) | Crocoshia |
| Agastache | Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta) | Daffodils (Narcissus hybrids) |
| Ageratum | Black Mondo Grass (Ophiopogon) | |
| Allium | Black Snakeroot (Cimicifuga) | |
| Anemone (Anemone x hybrida) | | |

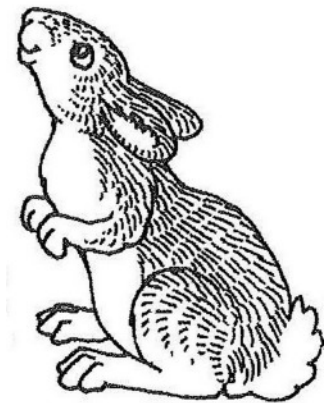
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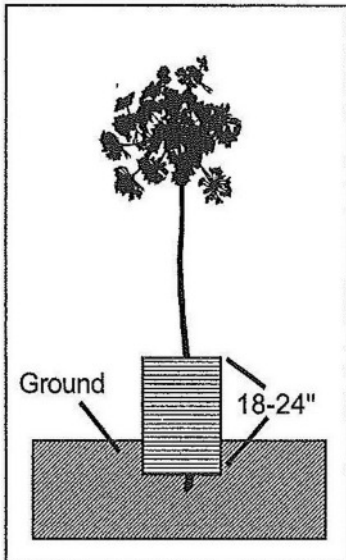
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Rabbit Trouble? cont.

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| Daylily (Hemerocallis) | Lavender (Lavendula) | Sea thrift (Armeria) |
| Dead nettle (Lamium maculatum) | Liriope | Sedum |
| Delphinium | Lungwort (Pulmonaria) | Sempervivum |
| False indigo (Baptisia australis) | Maiden grass (Miscanthus) | Siberian Iris |
| Forget-me-not (Myosotis scorpioides) | Marigold Tagetes | Snapdragons (Antirrhinum majus) |
| Foxglove (Digitalis) | Milkweed | Snow-in-summer (Cerastium tomentosum) |
| Gaillardia | Moss pink (Phlox subulata) | Spanish bluebell (Hyacinthoides hispanica) |
| Geranium or Cranesbill | Muhly grass (Muhlenbergia) | Speedwell (Veronica spp.) |
| Geum | Mums (Chrysanthemum) (Not guaranteed) | Spider flower (Cleome) |
| Ginger (Asarum spp.) | Oregano | St. John's wort (Hypericum) |
| Globe Thistle | Penstemon | Sweet Alyssum |
| Hellebore | Pincushion flower (Scabiosa) | Thyme |
| Hyssop | Poppy (Papaver) | Tickseed or Coreopsis |
| Ice plant (Lampranthus) | Pot Marigold | Verbena |
| Lady's Mantle (Alchemilla) | Rosemary | Vinca (perennial) |
| Lamb's ear (Stachys byzantina) | Russian sage (Perovskia atriplicifolia) | Wormwood |
| Lantana | Salvia (Sage spp.) | Yucca |
| Larkspur | Sea holly (Eryngium) | |



Damage Prevention and Control Methods

Exclusion

One of the best ways to protect a backyard garden or berry patch is to put up a fence. It does not have to be particularly tall or sturdy - a two-foot high fence of chicken wire or 1/4" hardware mesh (with the bottom buried 3 inches to prevent burrowing) is sufficient. Be sure the mesh is an inch or smaller, so young rabbits will not be able to get through it. You can protect your trees with cylinders of 1/4' wire mesh set firmly in the ground surrounding the trunk. The cylinders should be at least 18 to 24 inches high. (Commercial tree wraps and plastic guards also work.)

Repellents

For best results, repellents are most effective before damage occurs or at the first sign of damage. There are several types of repellents to discourage rabbit browsing. Among these are chemical repellents like Liquid Fence and organic "I Must Garden" Rabbit Repellent. Their residual effects work a little longer than those of odor or taste repellents.



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Most rabbit repellents are taste repellents or contact repellents, which make the treated plant distasteful to the rabbit. These repellents, such as Hot Pepper Wax spray, protect only the part of the plant they contact; new growth that emerges after application may not be protected. Heavy rains may necessitate reapplication of some repellents. Taste repellents are usually more effective than odor repellents. The degree of effectiveness, however, is highly variable, depending on the behavior and number of rabbits and alternative food sources available to them. When rabbits are abundant and hungry, use other control techniques along with chemical repellents.

Nonlethal Control

You can reduce the rabbits' habitat by removing brush piles, weed patches, dumps, stone piles, and other debris. Vegetation control along ditch banks and fence rows should help. Family pets, such as dogs and cats, may also help.

Trapping

Trapping is the best way to remove rabbits. The first step is to get a well-designed and well-built live trap. Several excellent styles of commercial traps are available. Most are made of wire and last indefinitely with proper care. Live trapping with a Havahart trap is an effective method for removing rabbits. The traps should be baited with apple slices and set in dense, brushy areas. The captured animals should be transported at least five miles away from the trapping site to discourage their return.

So don't despair! There's room for all of us if we'll simply make some adaptations. (After all, we're the ones who've encroached on the rabbits' habitat.)

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