

Living With Wildlife – Gardening Tips

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With nice weather upon us, many of us are planning our garden. Whether you are an avid gardener or just enjoy a few hanging baskets on your patio, sometimes wildlife may pose a challenge. So, what can you do to avoid the frustration of rabbits or groundhogs using your garden as an all-you-can-eat buffet?

There are some great non-toxic, natural deterrents that will reduce your garden's appeal to wildlife. These are most effective when you use as many as possible, overwhelming the animal with bad tastes and threatening smells. Start early in the season and be consistent for at least two weeks. Don't forget to refresh after heavy watering or rain!

You can introduce predator scents by sprinkling blood meal fertilizer on the soil and by placing dog hair in nylon stockings secured to low stakes around the garden. Other smell deterrents such as garlic and onion powder and lemon slices or lemon juice can also be used around plants. Talcum powder can be mixed with water and sprayed on plants, wash off vegetables before consuming. Plastic garden mesh or bird netting, found at building or garden centres, can be placed over shrubs, especially over new growth. Make sure to leave 2"– 3" at the bottom so small animals do not get trapped in the mesh. If you are an avid gardener, a fence may be worth considering.

When you plant bulbs in a garden bed or planter box, 1" x 1" welded wire mesh can be used to protect them. Place mesh over the bulbs and soil then secure firmly with metal pegs. The mesh should be placed 2"–3" below the soil. Plants will grow through the mesh but squirrels will not be able to reach the bulbs.

Squirrels will also dig in planter boxes and gardens to stash peanuts. If you are feeding peanuts to the birds or squirrels you can wean them off for the summer as there is lots of natural food. If you feed over the winter use large striped sunflower seeds as the animals will eat these and not stash them. If you think your neighbour is feeding peanuts, suggest they switch as well.

When working around your garden if you find baby rabbits or hares, it is normal not to see mom. Just leave them alone and they will disperse in a few weeks.

In the meantime, remember this is the height of the birthing season for wildlife. Do not take any action before first checking www.wildlifeinfo.ca for effective advice.