



## **PROTECTING** your gardens and lawns

*In an effort to coexist with wildlife, consider the enormous hardships these intelligent and fascinating wild species encounter because so much of their habitat has been destroyed. Each year they are forced into closer contact with humans and must compete with us for food, shelter and space. With a little understanding, patience and a few precautions and common sense steps, we can all enjoy the wonderfully interesting wild animals who share our backyards and cities.*

### **Common questions:**

#### **Who is digging up my lawn and what can I do about it?**

Both skunks and raccoons dig up lawns in search of grubs. Treating the lawn with an environmentally-friendly and non-toxic pesticide will control the grub population. If it is a small area of lawn, you can sprinkle or spray a repellent such as hot sauce diluted with water (one tablespoon in one gallon of water) on the area to deter wild animals.

#### **Who is eating my garden and how can I prevent this?**

Gardens are especially attractive to wildlife because they offer an accessible food source. Prior to attempting any deterrent or exclusion method, it is important to determine what type of animal is actually damaging the garden. Animals leave behind clues to their identity, and you can use them to figure out who is visiting your garden. For example:

- Ragged, torn twigs and leftover vegetation indicate a deer.
- Neatly clipped ends of twigs and vegetation indicate the presence of rabbits and woodchucks.
- Small, pea-shaped droppings in the area are also an indication of rabbits.

Once you have determined which animals are eating the garden, you can undertake some simple steps to prevent the activity.

### **Steps to prevent animals eating your garden:**

#### **Fences restrict rabbits and deer from access to gardens**

Physical barriers may be set up so that certain animals cannot access the garden. You may have

to place the fence a few inches into the ground so that animals cannot sneak under the fence. Obviously, the height of the fence would need to be greater to exclude deer than to exclude rabbits. Fencing material should be stronger than chicken wire because most animals can manipulate it and gain entry to the garden. Hardwire mesh works best. Fencing is usually not successful in restricting raccoons from gardens. They are very good climbers and would have no difficulties climbing over the fence.

### **Covers restrict most animals from vegetables**

Plant covers are also successful at keeping most animals from consuming garden plants. Covers can be purchased at garden centres, or you can make your own by cutting the bottom out of a milk or pop jug and placing it over the plant. To protect larger plants place a net over them. For fruit trees, large nets can be purchased which cover the whole top of the tree to protect the fruit from birds and wild animals. To protect tree trunks from wild animals, plastic or metal screens can be purchased and wrapped around the trunks to a height of about two to three feet.

### **Scare devices work on all animals**

Another approach to deter wild animals from your garden is to install scare devices. These devices are most useful when dealing with rabbits, groundhogs, skunks and raccoons.

There are many commercial products you can buy from garden centres, such as motion-sensitive lights, sprinklers and acoustical alarms.

There are also many homemade devices that are successful; such as the traditional scarecrow. The key to making this device successful is movement. For example, the scarecrow must move by wind or motorized equipment.

Another device to try is scare tape. Scare tape is reflective and auditory. Simply cut the tape into strips and attach them to posts or wires around the garden. The wind will cause the tape to reflect light and make noise, which will scare away wild animals. Aluminum pie plates can also be used.

**Note:** Any deterrent method you use may need to be changed from time to time as animals adapt and become accustomed to noises and motion. Scare devices must remain novel and strange in order to be effective.

### **Taste repellents**

You can also try a taste repellent applied to the plants that the wild animals are eating. A diluted mixture of hot sauce and water (one tablespoon of hot sauce in one gallon of water) can be sprayed directly on the fruits/vegetables or around the perimeter of the garden. Remember that if you apply the solution to fruits or vegetables you are consuming wash them thoroughly before eating.