



## Halt, Thief! - More Tips

**Don't let wildlife turn your garden plot into their food plot. Learn about common garden invaders and how to stop these garden critters in their tracks**

(from "Halt, Thief!" by John Morgan, page 2 of 2)

### 2. Creative Deterrents continued

Danny Hughes, a biologist who works with farmers, knows all about battles with garden goblins and has encountered some unique antidotes. He notes that a barber can be a gardener's best friend, as they actually generate ammunition to deter garden pests—human hair has been effective at minimizing damage.

Fill the feet of women's stockings with the hair to hang from trees surrounding the garden or scatter clippings around.

After the barber shop, stop at the grocery store for additional unusual deer-repellent: Hughes says hanging fragrant bars of soap can bother these garden foes.

When rabbits become a nuisance, try blood meal to keep them at bay.

"The great thing about blood meal is that it serves multiple purposes. It can be a great deterrent for rabbits while it fertilizes your garden. Blood meal is high in nitrogen, so you need to be cautious to not burn vegetables," Hughes says.

In addition to these low-tech methods, slightly more advanced technology also generates benefits for the modern gardener.

"Motion-sensing sprinklers not only create a startling noise to unwanted wildlife, but they reinforce their message with strong spray of water. It's a great tool to protect your garden," explains Hughes.

One final creative option is less of a deterrent than it is a lure.

If you have extra acreage, plant a wildlife food plot elsewhere on your farm. With this distraction in place, animals will have other dining options and are more likely to pass over your personal garden.

### 3. Fence 'em Out

When it comes to protecting your garden, nothing solves more problems than a fence. What could be simpler, right?

Yes and no.

A fence can be a significant investment depending on the size of your garden, and not every fence will deter every pest.

Woven-wire, electric, barbed or high tensile are all good garden options.

Before jumping to conclusions about the type of fence you need, know your potential garden goblins.

You can almost guarantee deer will be a problem, but how big of a problem? Look along a nearby line where a field and woods meet. If there's a clear line, roughly 4- to 6 feet high in the trees, that's a browse line, which is a characteristic of a high deer population. Dense deer herds require high fences (8 feet or more).

Lower levels of deer that have an abundance of natural foods can be more easily deterred.

Rabbits can require fencing, too, but generally a 2-foot fence that's partially buried in the ground will do.

If your farm has expansive woods and your open areas make up a small portion (20 percent or less) of the surrounding landscape, a fence may be necessary because of the sheer volume of visitors your garden will receive.

This type of garden is bound to be a magnet for populations of raccoons, opossums, skunks and deer. A fence won't guarantee their exclusion, but it is one more obstacle between them and your bounty.



A living fence, too, is something to consider.

Planting a vegetation border that's unattractive to wildlife can discourage their entrance. Plants with a strong scent, thick or leathery leaves, or fuzzy or spiny textures are unpalatable. Whether you plant shrubs, ground cover or ornamentals, these can both dress up and protect your garden.

A few to consider include narcissus, agastache, aster, echinops, cardoon, sedum, mint, oregano or rosemary. It's possible the wild creatures will turn around when they reach this barrier and your garden plants will be spared.

#### 4. Take it From the Top

Flying pests won't give much thought to a perimeter fence.

You need to meet them where they enter—from above. Placing a wire grid over the garden can dramatically reduce or eliminate crow problems. Wires placed in grid formation from 20 to 80 feet apart have been reported as successful deterrents.

#### 5. Use Predatory Instincts

When garden-pest infestations are severe, trapping or shooting may become necessary.

Like garden produce, wildlife can be a harvested crop when properly managed. Take advantage of existing hunting and trapping seasons to keep goblins in balance with their habitat; an abundance of natural foods makes your garden easier to defend.

If you don't enjoy hunting or trapping yourself, recruit others to perform that role for you—eager hunters are rarely in short supply.

Despite good wildlife management, you may still be faced with trapping problem individuals during the growing season. A good cage trap—found at hardware or garden centers—is in order. You'll want to bait the trap with treats that are tasty to whichever creature you're after. Rabbits will go for fresh veggies, canned meats tempt raccoons and skunks, and opossums often fall for apples and canned meats.

Upon capture, it's best to euthanize the animal, because transporting wild animals can spread disease or just pass off your problem to another landowner. Check your state regulations for rights afforded to the landowner suffering wildlife damage before employing trapping and shooting options.

Before you set a trap take these tips from two HF editors who learned how to deal with trapping garden pests the hard way:

Tie a 20-foot-long rope to the trap, and stretch the rope to its full length. Just in case you catch a skunk in there, you'll have plenty of leeway between you and it so you can move the trap and avoid a skunk-bath.

Make an inexpensive cover for the trap with a tarp and some duct tape. Whatever animal you catch, this will keep it covered and calm. If you end up with a skunk, the cover will deflect some of its spray.

The hours spent in the garden nurturing your food for the table can all go to waste if you ignore your garden goblins. In most cases, a fence can be all the protection needed.

Still, Rees has gardened for 49 years without a fence and continues to enjoy the fruits of his labors. He uses a combination of common sense and creative deterrents to protect his investment.

Each circumstance is unique, so evaluate and plan accordingly. If you detect an invasion, take immediate action. Letting wildlife become accustomed to feeding on your homegrown buffet will make deterring them more difficult.

Growing your own food is a rewarding experience. Taking the right steps before you plant will ensure that it stays that way!



management, and he is a Certified Wildlife Biologist. He owns and manages a 15-acre hobby farm in Kentucky.