

Remedies for Ridding Yourself of Pests

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Our gardens attract a lot of critters, mostly good -- but a few are bad. I constantly talk about how biodiversity is the key ingredient to our gardens, but sometimes rabbits, birds, dogs and cats want to use our garden as much as, if not more than, we do. It's a frustrating experience and one not easily rectified, but the Garden Guy is here with some new and not-so-new ideas on how to clean up the problem -- organically of course.

Rabbits invariably find their way into our gardens, especially if you live in the outlying areas of the Valley. They seem to come out of nowhere and in the dark of night. A good dog works great, but some other ideas that stop their appetite would be to liberally apply some bone meal and blood meal to the soil of the plants. They also seem to have an aversion to cayenne pepper. If all else fails, try fencing material about 2 feet high and buried 6 inches into the soil.

I have had a tremendous amount of calls on how to get rid of gophers. These pesky critters have a way of tunneling in areas that are right where we find ourselves waiting to look at or play in. I consider myself an ace trapper, but the secret is leaving no human scent on the trap. I first purchase a gopher trap, which are found in most feed stores. I then boil the traps in water for 5 to 10 minutes with a stick of creosote and I make sure I handle them with gloves that are covered in plastic, assuring that no scent is left on the trap. You must find the lateral tunnels and set the trap so it lies parallel to the tunnel run.

Another idea is to use dry ice. Dry ice can be stuck into the mound entrances and covered up. Make sure to find and cover up all of the holes so that the gas does not escape. The carbon dioxide will slowly seep into all the runs and you don't want to know the rest of the story. I have also poured castor oil down the holes.

Dogs seem to be an ongoing problem and if they are anything like my dogs they like to dig. A solution to this problem that I have used in the past is to blend together one part cayenne pepper, two parts mustard powder and two parts flour. Apply whenever they dig or whatever else dogs do and they soon avoid these areas. If you have a dog that does not get the idea, try pure cayenne pepper.

As for cats, I will take clippings from the rose bushes -- it needs to have a lot of thorns -- and apply them to the areas they frequent. Last, but not least, if those pesky pigeons are making your home their home, try a light spraying of Dr. Bronner's Peppermint Soap, which can be found at Wild Oats. A lot of times, this is more effective to spray while they are roosting.