



## Animal Pests of Flowers

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### I. General

**Difficulties**, esp. compared to insects, diseases, weeds

- animals have some intelligence, can overcome obstacles
- often can't kill eg domestic pets, "bambi" laws

#### Repellents

- variable success with location, year; often help if not real hungry or population pressures not too great
- animals learn from experience (eg Pavlov)
- best control usually exclusion eg deer fence, bulb cage, electric fence
- live traps may be option
  - problems: catch unwanted eg cats, skunks or regulations against relocating
  - use caution trapping larger live animals to not be bitten as many carry communicable diseases such as rabies

#### Killing

- snap traps (often leg hold banned, not good practice), most common for mice/voles
- poison baits are common where other desirable animals will not get or will not get the poisoned animals (eg cats eating poisoned voles or mice)
- shooting--usually regulations, safety concerns in populated areas

### II. Pests

**Mice/Voles**--serious problem across country, look similar and cause similar damage but are distantly related

- live in grassy areas, leaf mulch, travel in tunnels
- feed on any vegetation including bulbs and tubers, then on bark young trees and shrubs
- exclude with barriers, trap at main runways with peanut butter bait or vitamin D (several day death from calcium imbalance), other repellents such as castor oil may help, poison baits, get a cat or dachshund

**Moles**--serious problem across country

- live in tunnels which help aerate soil, but provide tunnels for other animals and may provide excessive soil disturbance heaving plants
- help by eating insects like grubs, hurt by also eating earthworms
- eliminate insects they feed on, trap similar to voles

**Pocket Gophers**--occasional problem in deep South and West

- live in tunnels in soil creating mound at entrance
- feed on roots and bulbs
- control with traps, cats

**Chipmunks/Ground squirrels**--former serious problem in East, latter serious problem in West, similar

- live in tunnels or burrows, former run almost vertical, latter run horizontal; uproot new plantings
- feed on seeds, nuts, fruits, roots, bulbs, other
- trap using peanut butter, oats, nut meats, sunflowers seeds; spray repellents on bulbs, or plant with jagged shells or stones in holes; exclude with plant cages; get a cat or two

**Tree Squirrels**--occasional problem across country

- live in nests in trees
- feed on fruit, nuts, insects, bark, seeds, other

- cage new plantings, trap using sunflower seeds, peanut butter, raisins

**Rabbits**--serious problem across the country

- live in grassy areas, thickets
- feed on vegetables, flowers, tree bark; active during day all year in most areas
- fence out with chicken wire or hardware cloth cages higher than snow level, repellents as for deer and inflatable snakes may help

**Groundhogs/Woodchucks**--occasional problem in northern states

- live in burrows with two or more openings with mounds at entrance
- feed in early morning and late afternoon on tender vegetables and flowers, especially pencil-thick stems like phlox, and occasionally on bark
- trap live; fence out 3 feet high, 12" in front and slightly buried, with top 18" unattached; repel with taste sprays on desirable flowers, predator urines, oily substances at hole entrances; insert poison gas cartridges in holes and cover to kill

**Skunks**--occasional problem across country

- live in rural, wooded areas
- feed on insects, small rodents, fruits, berries, other vegetables; more nuisance from smell than problem eating flowers, also carry rabies
- fence out as for groundhogs; if trapping live bait with sardines or cat food and wear protective clothing and eye goggles

**Racoons**--occasional problem across country

- live in wooded rural or lightly populated areas in natural shelters such as logs, near water
- feed on insects, small animals, grains especially corn, vegetables, other; not so much a problem in flower gardens
- exclude with fence as for groundhogs, only 4' high; electric fences; trapping as for skunks

**Deer**--serious problem across country, even in populated areas with few natural predators and strict control laws

- prefer wooded areas, tall grass, thickets
- eat on most plants and bark of woody plants, if hungry or high populations, exclusion may be only control
- many controls available including various taste and smell repellents (deer have a keen sense of smell); light or noise emitters (must be moved often as deer are smart and learn quickly); electric fence baited with peanut butter (one taste wont kill but will deter); best is exclusion with 3-wire triangular or slanted fences, or high (8-10') deer fences (woven wire mesh or heavy fishing line every 2 ft high, if the latter they lines must be flagged as deer can't see well and will try jumping through); dogs (a pack of deer may outsmart, and the dogs may themselves be a problem)

**Dogs**--serious problem across country

- devastate gardens running and romping; dig soil and plantings; leave droppings
- exclude with fences, repel with plant sprays specific for these; contain dogs, talking to owners or using "wireless" fence collars

**Cats**--usually beneficial by catching rodents, but may be serious problem across country

- may be a problem by digging up new plantings
- lay chicken wire on or over new and young beds, spray plants with repellents