

The great poet Robert Frost wrote a poem called “Mending Wall.” You might recall that from the poem came the well-known line, “Good fences make good neighbors.” Sometimes I feel that saying is actually contradictory to building good relations with your next-door neighbors. After all, a fence creates a boundary and a barrier between you and your neighbor; certainly not characteristic of being neighborly.

Today, however, it’s not about fencing out our two-legged neighbors; but, rather, about good fences making for good neighbors of the four-legged type.

I love wildlife but not necessarily in my flower or vegetable gardens. Every year, I am repeatedly asked the same question, “How do I keep certain critters out of the garden?” Although that question most frequently involves rabbits, I also hear it applied to deer, raccoons, opossum, skunks and even dogs and cats. In most all situations, my standard answer is, build a good fence.

Good fencing is the only sure cure for keeping wild and domestic animals out of a prized garden. It’s usually the only way to guarantee protecting your landscape from costly damage. Depending on the critter, the fencing may be simple to erect and relatively inexpensive; whereas, keeping out larger animals, such as deer, is usually more difficult to build and involves greater expense.

Here are a few pointers to consider before building any fence.

First, check with local ordinances. Building permits may be required. Pay close attention to property lines. Large fences may block desired views or violate codes. Design and build the fence to fit the animal.

Below I’ve listed a few four-legged neighbors you may wish to keep at bay and fencing tips on how to foil their invasions.

Rabbits, dogs and cats can usually be kept out with a simple chicken wire fence. The fence should be at least two foot high with one inch diameter holes. To prevent them from digging under, curve the bottom of the fence 90 degrees to create an apron a foot or so wide, and bury it several inches deep.

Raccoons, skunks and opossums dig and climb. An electric fence wire strung around the top of a four-foot-tall fence should discourage these pests. The fence should also have a two-foot-wide apron buried a few inches below the soil to prevent them from burrowing under the fence. Keep in mind electric fences work best if animals know they are hot. Smear peanut butter on the fence soon after it is erected. The peanut butter



will entice the animals, cause a shock, and result in animals less likely to test the fence again.



Keeping deer out involves considerably more work. Because deer can jump, the fence needs to be high. My nephew, Jason Griess, who lives on the outer edge of Brooklyn Park, MN, has constructed a magnificent raised- bed garden. Unfortunately, he had a problem with deer. As a result, Jason built a fool- proof deer fence. I've attached photos. If deer damage is occurring on your property, consider consulting the Nebraska

Game and Parks people. They have many design variations for deer barriers.

I still believe that although the famous statement, "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors" was introduced in Robert Frost's poem, "Mending Wall", it's not be the best way to treat our two-legged, next-door neighbors. I'm more convinced that caring and compassion work better. However, rest assured when it comes to our four-legged neighbors, "Good Fences Do Make Good Neighbors!"