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Reducing Wildlife Damage

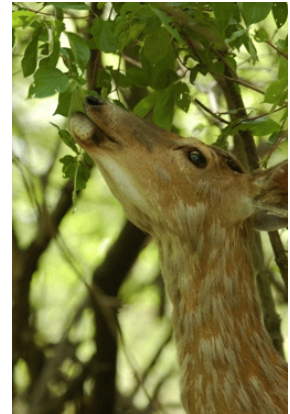
Proactive prevention is the best way to minimize wildlife damage. Try to protect high-value items with fences and physical deterrents. Supply alternative resources so wildlife has less need for desired items. Provide feed stations, water and nesting material. Chemical repellents are an option. They work best when there are enough alternative resources in the area.

Competition and predation witnessed first-hand may make some people uncomfortable. Yet, competition and predation are natural in a diverse system of habitat, and cannot be eliminated.

The Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management (<http://icwdm.org/>) is a non-profit, grant funded site that provides research-based information on how to responsibly handle wildlife damage problems. The Center is a collaborative effort by Cornell University, Clemson University, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, and Utah State University.

Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage (<http://icwdm.org/handbook/index.asp>) is the nationally recognized handbook that details identification, control and management of over 90 species of wildlife, written by almost as many authorities in their respective wildlife areas.

Urban Pest Birds: Controlling Damage (<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/live/g2024/build/g2024.pdf>) describes physical characteristics, habits and management of house sparrows, starlings and pigeons.



January Garden Activities

- Slick sidewalks and roads are hazardous. Removing compacted snow and ice with shovels or snow blowers is not always an easy task. Deicers can help by “undercutting,” or loosening the snow or ice because they lower the freezing point of water. However, deicers can affect plants so use them with care. For more information, review Winter Deicing Agents for the Homeowner. (<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/pages/index.jsp?what=publicationD&publicationId=716>)



- Carefully brush heavy snow from trees and shrubs with a broom. If ice accumulates, let it melt naturally. Do not hit a plant in an effort to knock snow off or shatter ice as this can lead to branch breakage.

- For ideas on new annual flower and vegetable cultivars being released this year, visit the All-American Selections web site at <http://www.all-americanselections.org/> for their current releases.

- Check trees and shrubs for rabbit & vole injury. Young thin-barked trees are susceptible to damage when other food sources are scarce, particularly willow, maple and apple. Winters with deep snow usually result in increased damage. Damage must be prevented, rather than "cured".

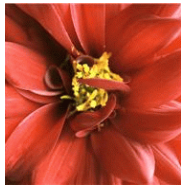
- Monitor weekly precipitation, whether snow or rain, and water during dry periods



when the soil is not frozen. Winter droughts need treatment with water just as summer droughts do. Deeply water trees with a slowly running sprinkler left in place long enough to moisten the top 12 inches of soil. Do not use 'root feeders' or deep root watering devices. Apply the water slowly enough that it can soak in and does not run off.

- Get catalogs and order seeds and plants early for best selection. For suggestions of recommended vegetable cultivars to try in your garden, review Selected Vegetable Cutivars for Nebraska at <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/live/g1896/build/g1896.pdf>. General and Specialty Mail-Order Seed Sources (<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/live/g1895/build/g1895.pdf>) provides a list of many reputable companies to consider.

- If you like to be the first gardener in your neighborhood to harvest tomatoes and consequently plant tomatoes early in spring, you probably use some type of "hotcap" to protect your plants from late spring frosts. Research on hotcaps has shown that water filled plastic tubing, such as Wall-o-Water®, provides the best protection. Review Early Season Extension Using Hotcaps at <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/live/g1745/build/g1745.pdf> for more information.



- Check stored bulbs, tubers, corns and rhizomes, such as dahlias, gladiolas, elephant ear, caladium, tuberous begonias and cannas. Discard any that are soft or rotted. If bulb-like plants start to shrivel, soak them in water for a short time to allow them to imbibe water and plump back up.

- Depending on several cultural factors, your poinsettia will do one of two things after the holidays- hold onto its leaves or drop its leaves. If the plant holds its leaves, treat it like any houseplant. Leave it in a sunny location and apply a complete, water-soluble, blooming-plant fertilizer once every two weeks. If the plant loses its leaves, place it in a bright, cool location (50-55 degrees), such as on a basement window ledge, but avoid locations with temperatures above 60° F degrees. Let the soil dry out, but never let it get so dry that the stems start to shrivel. Allow the plant to rest in this condition until spring. In late April or early May cut back the stems to 3-5 inches from the soil and place it in a bright, warm location, watering whenever the soil dries out. New growth will begin to emerge. Pinch the new shoots back when they reach 4-6 inches in length to encourage bushiness.

- Christmas cactus is a tropical plant that likes a brightly lit location, but not direct sun. Water it well, adding fertilizer once a week while it is blooming. Some flower buds may fall off if there are too many for the plant to support or if the plant has been underwatered or overwatered. Turn the plant often so it receives even light. In the summer months when the plant is resting, keep the soil almost dry.



- If you've succeeded with African violets try these related plants, both commonly known as lipstick or goldfish plant- *Columna banksii* (smooth waxy leaves) and *C. gloriosa* (hairy leaves). These vining plants, with tubular yellow, orange or red flowers, require bright light, but no direct sun, and average room temperatures. Provide high levels of humidity with frequent misting, a pebble tray, or by placing the plant in a bathroom or kitchen.

- Fungus gnats are small fly-like insects that may be noticed flying around houseplants. They are commonly associated with overwatered houseplants or those grown in poorly drained potting mixes. If a houseplant pot is harboring fungus gnats, treat the soil with insecticidal soap or incorporate diatomaceous earth in the soil to kill the maggots. Another management approach is to cut back on watering so the soil dries out between watering. Any maggots present in the soil will dry out and lack of water will reduce fungal growth, reducing the food supply for adult fungus gnats. A third option is a combination of letting the soil dry between watering and then watering with a solution of water and insecticidal soap.

- Don't fertilize houseplants this month unless they are under high light intensity. Leaves of split-leaf philodendron will not split under low light intensity.