

## **Harmony in the Wild: Peaceful Coexistence with Wildlife**

**Peacefully coexisting with backyard wildlife enriches our lives in many ways, offering meaningful connection to the natural world right outside our doors.**

**Embracing this harmony fosters biodiversity and allows us to witness the fascinating behaviors of our wild neighbors, creating a deeper appreciation for nature.**

**When wildlife conflicts arise, lethal means of nuisance animal control are not ideal for reasons including ethical concerns, legal restrictions, and public safety issues. Killing an individual animal does not address the root cause of a pest problem (such as habitat attractants), and rarely provides long term solutions. Poisons, glue traps, and other lethal measures pose risks to non-target animals, pets, and even children.**

***Focus on humane and ecofriendly methods for pest and wildlife control. This can involve prevention, habitat modification, repellents, and exclusion techniques that address issues without causing harm to animals or the environment. Peacefully coexisting with a diverse range of wildlife will contribute to a more balanced ecosystem, with predator species serving as natural pest population control.***

### **Garden Tips**

1. Fence your garden: Install a sturdy fence around your garden area to keep out larger animals like deer and groundhogs. Cover plants with netting or mesh to protect them from birds and smaller animals.
2. Repellents: Consider using animal repellents or sprays that are safe for your plants. These can deter animals by making your garden less appealing to them.
3. Plant strategically: Choose plants that are less attractive to wildlife. Research native plants that are less likely to be a food source.
4. Plant surplus and harvest promptly: Pick vegetables as soon as they ripen to reduce the attraction for animals. Surplus planting allows for some bumper crop loss without cutting into your harvest.
5. Companion Planting: Incorporate plants that deter wildlife (see accompanying handout).

### **Around the Home**

1. Secure trash cans: Make sure your trash cans have secure lids to prevent raccoons and other scavengers from accessing them.
2. Remove water sources: Eliminate standing water sources in your yard, as these can attract wildlife (including mosquitoes that transmit disease).
3. Install Motion-activated devices: Install motion-activated sprinklers or lights to startle and deter wildlife when they approach your garden.

4. Scare Tactics: Pinwheels and aluminum pans move in the wind, creating auditory and visual deterrent on a budget. Scarecrows and plastic owl decoys imitate predators.
5. Block means of entrance for small animals: Holes, gaps, and chimneys should be secured or repaired to prevent small animals from seeking shelter in your home or attic.

### **Bird Feeders (Dinner by Invite Only)**

1. Install "Baffles": Use baffles (squirrel guards) to block access to the feeder by climbing animals. Baffles can also be installed above or below feeders to deter raccoons.
2. Position Feeders Wisely: Place your bird feeders away from trees, structures, or other objects that squirrels and raccoons can use to jump onto the feeder. Ideally, position the feeder at least 10-12 feet from any potential launch point.
3. Use a Tray Under the Feeder: This can help catch spilled seed and prevent attracting rodents.

### **Pet Safety**

1. Supervise Your Pets: When your pets are outside, always supervise them. This is particularly important during dawn and dusk when many wildlife species are active.
2. Use a Leash: Keep your dog on a leash during walks to prevent them from chasing wildlife. This is not only safer for the wildlife but also for your pet.
3. Secure Food: Don't leave pet food outside or feed wildlife "people" food. Feeding wildlife can make them sick or dependent upon humans.
4. Install Fencing: Install sturdy fences to keep your pets in your yard and wildlife out. Make sure the fence is buried deep enough to prevent digging under by raccoons or foxes.
5. Install Motion-Activated Lights: Motion-activated lights can startle and deter nocturnal wildlife from approaching your home.
6. Educate Your Neighbors: Encourage your neighbors to take similar precautions to prevent wildlife conflicts, as collective efforts can help reduce interactions.
7. Contact Local Wildlife Authorities: If you notice persistent wildlife issues in your neighborhood, contact HAR (412-345-7300 x 500) or animal control.
8. Vaccinate Pets: Ensure that your pets are up to date on their vaccinations, including those for diseases that can be transmitted by wildlife, like rabies.

**Familiarizing yourself with local wildlife is key to peacefully co-existing with your animal neighbors. Knowing the behavior patterns, habits, and needs of local wildlife species can help you anticipate their actions. For example, understanding when certain animals are most active or what they are attracted to can help you take preventive measures at the right times.**

## **Companion Herbs and Flowers for Western Pennsylvania**

**Marigolds:** These colorful flowers can deter rabbits and deer due to their strong scent.

**Lavender:** Lavender's strong aroma can help keep deer and rabbits away.

**Rosemary:** This fragrant herb can deter a variety of pests, including deer and some insects.

**Basil:** Basil can repel certain insects and may help protect nearby plants.

**Chives:** Chives can deter aphids and some insects, which indirectly helps protect your garden.

**Nasturtiums:** These vibrant flowers can deter aphids, whiteflies, and squash bugs.

**Garlic:** Garlic can help repel a range of pests, including deer and some insects.

**Onions:** Onions can deter a variety of garden pests.

**Catnip:** Catnip can help deter certain pests, and cats are attracted to it, which may discourage other animals (although pet cats are safest kept indoors).

## **Native Plants to Try**

**Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*):** attractive to beneficial pollinators

**Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*):** delicate, fern-like leaves and unique flowers

**Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*):** highly attractive to pollinators

**Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*):** a favorite of monarch butterflies

**Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*):** heart-shaped leaves and a unique appearance that tends to deter herbivores.

**Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*):** early spring blooms

**Blue False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*):** tall spikes of pea-like flowers

**Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*):** delicate white or pinkish flowers

**Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*):** similar to bee balm, aromatic leaves and flowers

**Sundrops (*Oenothera fruticosa*):** bright yellow flowers

**While these native plants are generally less attractive to deer and rabbits, no plant is entirely deer or rabbit-proof, especially in times of food scarcity.**

***Remember that no companion planting strategy is foolproof, and wildlife may still occasionally visit your garden. Combine companion planting with other methods like fencing and repellents for more effective wildlife control. Additionally, what works best depends on the specific wildlife in your area, so you may want to consult with local gardening experts for personalized advice.***

## **Eco Friendly Sprays and Odorous Deterrents**

**Homemade Pepper Spray:** Mix water and hot chili peppers or hot pepper powder and then spray it on your plants. The spicy smell and taste can deter many mammals.

**Garlic and Onion Spray:** Blend garlic and onions with water, strain the mixture, and use it as a spray. The strong smell of garlic and onions can help repel various pests.

**Egg-Based Sprays:** Mix raw eggs with water and spray it on your plants. The smell and texture can deter deer and rabbits.

**Neem Oil:** Neem oil is a natural pesticide and repellent effective against a wide range of pests.

**Essential Oil Sprays:** Essential oils like peppermint, eucalyptus, and lavender can be diluted with water and sprayed in your garden. They also give your garden a pleasant fragrance.

**Predator Urine:** You can purchase predator urine, such as coyote or fox urine, and use it as a deterrent. The scent can make smaller mammals think a predator is nearby.

**Soap and Water Spray:** A mixture of mild dish soap and water can be sprayed on plants to deter insects. It can also deter some mammals, like deer, due to its taste.

**Irish Spring Soap:** The highly fragrant bar soap can be hung or shaved and scattered around gardens, where its odor is disliked by animals with delicate senses of smell (as well as slugs and snails). Irish Spring will not harm plants for consumption.

## **Eco-friendly Commercial Repellents:**

**Bobbex:** a range of products, including deer and rabbit repellents, natural ingredients.

**Liquid Fence:** animal repellent sprays for deer, rabbits, and other pests, biodegradable.

**PlantSkydd:** plant-based deer and rabbit repellent, rain-resistant.

**Repellex:** deer, rabbit, and mole repellents, biodegradable and safe for the environment.

**Shake-Away:** granular repellents made from predator urine granules, such as coyote or fox urine, which can deter smaller mammals.

**Critter Ridder:** spray and granules that are effective against raccoons, squirrels, and skunks.

***Consider rotating between different repellents to prevent wildlife from becoming accustomed to a single method. Remember to reapply these deterrents after rain or when their effectiveness diminishes. Always follow the instructions on the label, and be cautious with any substances that come into contact with edible parts of your plants.***