

# Rabbits

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## Cottontail Rabbit Damage Control

### Protecting-Vegetable Gardens and Flowers

1. In rural and rural-suburban areas where rabbits are abundant, the most cost efficient damage control is fencing using chicken wire, electric wire, row covers or heavy duty plastic net. Surround the garden with 36 inch widths of chicken wire attached to stakes. Bend the bottom 6 inches outward along the ground to prevent digging under the fence. By bending the top 6 inches outward, you can also prevent other animals from climbing the fence.

2. Plastic netting can be used in the same way as chicken wire. Use 2 layers if the netting is light gauge because rabbits will chew through netting.

3. Row covers are spun cloth-when placed over susceptible plants and weighted down around the perimeter, it will prevent rabbit feeding on vegetables. The cover will allow up to 90% of sunlight to pass through. Select sizes that will expand to allow the plants to grow underneath. Use mulches to control weeds, watch for damage.

4. Encircle the garden with an electric fence by suspending 2 wires from insulators attached to stakes or rods. String the bottom wire 2 inches above the ground on the outside and the top wire 4 inches above the ground on the inside. Keep the wires weed and grass free. Charge with a garden electric fence charger.

5. Hinder is the most effective commercial rabbit repellent and will repel

rabbits from all plants. Mix and apply according to the label. Make the first application to all plants in the garden and to all vegetation immediately surrounding the garden within 10 feet. Thereafter, apply only to vulnerable plants with as little material as possible. Re-treat every 10-14 days or after every rain. Thiram is another excellent repellent but can be used only on ornamental plants. Apply at 10-20% concentration. Re-treat new growth.

6. Other rabbit repellents are less effective or more costly. However, used kitty litter from a cat that hunts and kills wildlife in and around the garden will repel rabbits. Scatter fresh kitty litter from such a cat in and around the garden once a week. [NOTE: skip this idea if you are pregnant.]

### Protecting Ornamental Trees and Shrubs in Winter

The most efficient and effective way to prevent rabbits from gnawing the bark off trees and shrubs is to encircle the base with a 12 inch - 24 inch width of 1 inch mesh chicken wire or welded wire. (If snow depth exceeds 18 inches, wider widths are necessary.) No supporting stakes are needed. The wire will remain effective for 5-10 years if left in place. If wire is undesirable, spray the bark of the trees and shrubs with 10-20% thiram mixed with a good sticker (adhesive), sticker-spreader, or anti-desiccant that acts as a sticker. Apply in late fall when temperatures are above freezing, to all surfaces that rabbits might gnaw. Re-apply in late winter if necessary.

## Rabbit Resistant Plants

This list is not foolproof! If your resident rabbits are hungry enough, they'll eat just about anything. If possible, protect all new plants with chicken wire initially. Also, use the largest plants you can afford (ie: 5 gallons instead of 1 gallon). Also, we'd love to add plants to this list, so please let us know if other things work for you! (Call 517-676-7207 or email [cvernon@ingham.org](mailto:cvernon@ingham.org))

In general, rabbits are discouraged by: Very aromatic plants: prickles and spines; and, tough, leathery leaves.

The following plants are well worth experimenting with:

*Acanthus*  
*Aconitum* (Monkswood)  
*Agave Species* (although jack rabbits will munch on softer-leaved agaves)  
*Anemone*  
*Arundinaria* (bamboos)  
*Asclepias subulata* (Desert milkweed [use a cage to protect when young])  
*Aucuba* (spotted Laurel)  
*Baccharis species*  
*Berberis species* (Barberry)  
*Buddleia marrubiifolia* (Woolly butterfly bush)  
*Buxus* (box)  
*Calliandra eriophylla* (Pink fairy duster [use a cage when young])  
*Choisya* (Mexican orange blossom)  
*Colchicum* (autumn crocus)  
*Convallaria* (lily of the valley)  
*Cordia parvifolia* (Littleleaf cordial)  
*Cornus* (dogwood)  
*Cotoneaster*  
*Daffodils*  
*Dalea capitata* (Sierra Gold)  
*Daphne*  
*Digitalis* (Foxglove)  
*Elaeagnus*  
*Encella Farinosa* (Brittlebush)  
*Ericameria laricifolia* (Turpentine bush)  
*Eriogonum species*  
*Eryngium* (sea holly)  
*Euphorbia biglandulosa* (Gopher plant)  
*Fuchsia*  
*Gaultheria*  
*Geranium*  
*Helleborus*

*Hippophae*  
*Hyacinth*  
*Hypericum*  
*Ilex* (holly)  
*Irises*  
*Justicia californica* (Chuparosa [use cage to protect when young])  
*Lantana species*  
*Leucophyllum species* (use 5 gallon or larger size containers for best results)  
*Ligularia*  
*Lupin*  
*Melampodium leucanthum* (Blackfoot daisy)  
*Nolina species* (Beargrass)  
*Olearia*  
*Osteospermum*  
*Penstemon species*  
*Peonies*  
*Poppies*  
*Rhododendrom*  
*Rhus* (spoke bush)  
*Rosa* (spiny species)  
*Rosmarinus* (rosemary)  
*Ruscus* (butchers broom)  
*Salvia species*  
*Sambucus* (elder)  
*Santolina species*  
*Sedum*  
*Simmondsia chinensis* (Jojoba)  
*Snowdrops*  
*Solomon's Seal*  
*Sophora secundiflora* (Texas mountain laurel)  
*Symphoricarpus* (snowberry)  
*Taxus* (yews)  
*Verbena species* (may be eaten when plants are young and succulent)  
*Viburnum*  
*Yucca*

*Zauschneria californica*  
(Hummingbird

bush)



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