

# Raccoons

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## Repelling Raccoons

Over the years, home gardeners have resorted to a wide variety of anti-raccoon tactics, from planting vining winter squash around sweet corn to putting flashing lights or blaring radios in the garden, sprinkling unpleasant substances on the ground around the garden and tying the family dog out there at night. While some of these tactics may seem to work-in many cases it is just plain luck that raccoons have not found their way into the garden.

Flashing lights, for instance, might work in rural areas where traffic is sparse and the local raccoons are not accustomed to auto headlights or lights from nearby businesses. Urban raccoons may not be fazed for very long by the same tactics.

The best way to keep raccoons out of the garden is to fence them out. Two- or three-wire electric fencing, a floppy, C-shaped chicken wire fence or a barrier of sturdy cloth may be effective.

For an electric fence, select a charger designed specifically for gardens and two or three hot wires (to save on your electric bill, consider a solar charger). Place the first wire 2 inches above the ground outside of the garden and the next wire 2-3 inches above it inside the garden. A third, higher wire may be necessary. The higher ones should be inside the lower one by about the width of the insulator. An animal trying to go over or under the higher one will put the animal in contact with the other. Touching both wires at once is usually unpleasant enough to deter most animals from a return trip to the garden. Be sure to use a charge that electrifies the fences in pulses--a constant charge poses a hazard to birds.

Put an electric fence around the entire garden early in the season to keep out rabbits and woodchucks. The wire must be free of vegetation to be effective. A fence made of 48-wire wide chicken wire needs to be shaped like a large letter C opening outward from the garden. The bottom part of the C rests on the ground to stop raccoons, rabbits and other animals from simply going under the fence. The overhanging part keeps them from climbing or jumping over.

Fasten the wire to sturdy posts so that the top part is floppy. The wire should bend down under the weight of the raccoon trying to climb over it. A nice, tight fence would look better, but raccoons will swarm right up and over it.

Raccoons may ignore a garden they cannot see if it is enclosed in cloth or plastic. Use heavy muslin, lightweight canvas or heavy plastic at least 4 feet wide. Fasten it to rope tied to wood or

metal posts spaced 8 to 10 feet apart. The bottom edge laps onto the ground, where boards and bricks, cement blocks or other weights hold it down. Like the chicken wire fence, raccoons have trouble climbing over it or digging under it.

Trapping raccoons is difficult and not likely to be effective, due to the number of raccoons that may inhabit the area. Often, there is a certain amount of red tape involved in getting a permit. Raccoons can be difficult to trap. Although, I have had great success trapping them before the corn is ready by using tuna fish as bait. Traps placed with their open ends against a raccoon-proof fence at a 45 degree angle to the fence often trap raccoons that are persistent in trying to find a way under, over or through a fence.

There is a challenge in getting rid of a trapped raccoon. It is legal to dispose of the raccoon that is causing damage on your property. **WARNING:** It is illegal to release an animal onto private property without the landowner's permission. IF you don't have the courage to dispose (by lethal methods) of it, don't trap it.

Remember, there are two reliable options to excluding the raccoon...fence the rascals out and do not grow things they like (like sweet corn).



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