

Create a safe tick-free zone in your yard

Despite their diminutive stature, ticks are a big concern for people, particularly those with pets.

As the weather warms, ticks are out looking for a host to climb on and get a blood meal. Ticks are a significant concern because they can be infected with bacteria, viruses or parasites, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia, and babesiosis are just a few of the many tick-borne diseases. These pathogens can be passed to humans and pets via the bite of infected ticks. In 2018, at least one variety of disease-transmitting tick had been found in all of the lower 48 states, according to the CDC. In addition, researchers at Cornell University identified 26 species of ticks along the East Coast alone. Preventing tick bites has never been more important. The process starts right in one's own backyard.

According to *Consumer Reports* and the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program, controlling wildlife that enters one's yard can help keep tick numbers down. Open access means animals can enter and so can ticks. Fencing and pest management solutions may help.

Other ideas include landscaping techniques that can reduce tick populations:

- Remove leaf litter from the yard.
- Clear tall grasses and brush around homes and at the edges of the lawn. Mow regularly to keep the lawn short.
- Create a barrier between wooded areas and the yard if it abuts a forested area. According to *Consumer Reports*, a three-foot-wide path of wood chips or gravel can prevent tick migration by creating a physical barrier that's dry and sometimes too hot for ticks to tolerate. Such a barrier also serves as a visual



reminder to anyone in your household to be especially careful if they step beyond the perimeter.

- Bag grass clippings, which can serve as habitats for ticks.
- Remove old furniture, trash and other debris that can give ticks places to hide.

- Remember to use a tick-repellent product when venturing into wooded areas. Flea and tick products also are available for pets; consult with a vet. Ticks are problematic, but various measures can help control tick populations in a yard.

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