

Expensive dilemma in little garden

I have an expensive dilemma in my little garden, thanks to an appreciation of wildlife. My altruistic intentions are one thing, but keeping voracious interlopers off

my vegetables is a whole 'nother issue. I asked for it in the first place, inviting all critters great and small to my little urban plot. Even put up a

Backyard Wildlife Habitat welcome sign, courtesy of the National Wildlife Federation. And it has paid off with songbirds, flying squirrels, owls, different lizards

and pencil-size slug-eating "worm" snakes, lightening bugs, native pollinator flies and bees, and so much more. I do have a few rules about their behavior, including discouraging toolshed-nesting wasps, and relocating big spiders when they try to entangle me on my paths. I won't tolerate venomous snakes, but I leave harmless others to keep rodents in check. Heck, I even get along with a colony of tick- and flea larvae-eating fire ants out by the street, long as they keep to themselves.

But now, after starting a new raised bed as a Covid project, I have had to dust off a phrase popularized by Ben Franklin: "Love your neighbors, but keep your fences."

It's not just keeping good relations; in my case it became a literal thing when my otherwise wonderful neighbor starting allowing raccoons to share cat food with his old kitty.

I generally don't mind them, as long as they don't burrow under my cabin. But when they are done feeding next door, they swing by my little kitchen garden for late night snacks. They, and the orphaned 'possum I rescued and let loose in my garden. And squirrels, and neighbors' feral cats, and various rodents. And butterflies with their ravenous caterpillar offspring.

So far the deer that occasionally roam alongside the creek across the street haven't found what's left of my generous spread. Anyway, after decades as an Extension horticulturist, and many years of working with fellow horticulturists and garden consultants, including many who manage botanic gardens, I know a thing or two about garden pests. And we all agree, from collective experience and deep research, that in most

cases neither the countless anecdotal pie-in-the-sky home remedies nor commercial repellents work well, if at all, or for long. If they did, we would ALL know about it by now, and we seasoned experts wouldn't have pests in our own gardens.

So what do I do? In a word, I fence. Hog wire or dog fencing for determined big animals, chicken wire for smaller foragers, and netting for birds and insects. The lightweight netting is a must for keeping cabbage moths and squash vine borers from laying eggs, though

I do have to lift it to hand-pollinate my squash. So far I haven't had to deploy my small electric fence setup.

Permanent fencing isn't cheap, and none of it is easy or terribly attractive, but they work. Repeat this in your mind: fences and screening work.

I put posts around my little raised bed, attached permanent fencing to the ends and back side, and made a removable front side panel and easy-lift top panel for easy access to digging, planting, and harvesting.

Under the creative spell of boredom I spray painted the fencing for more color in the little garden, because why not? Some folks wear lipstick and mascara. Set a little birdhouse on one of the fence posts, and a simple but cheery scarecrow on another. It all helps me smile.

So, yeah. I'm not 100 percent wildlife friendly. Still, I'm ready, if that's what it takes to avoid wasting money, effort, and precious time in the garden.

Felder Rushing is a Mississippi author, columnist, and host of the "Gestalt Gardener" on MPB Think Radio. Email gardening questions to rushingfelder@yahoo.com.



FELDER RUSHING



CHICKEN WIRE AND INSECT NETTING

NOTICE POLLING PLACE CHANGE IN THE CITY OF DURANT WARD 5 ONLY

The Polling place in Durant at the **National Guard located at 16110 North Jackson Street, Durant, MS has been changed to** the New Senior Citizen Bldg. in Durant, MS located at 460 Northwest Depot Street, Durant, MS effective immediately for **WARD 5 VOTERS ONLY.**

Therefore, all voters who will be casting a ballot in the upcoming Municipal Primary Election for Mayor and all Alderpersons will have to do so at the New Senior Citizen Bldg. **460 Northwest Depot Street in Durant, MS IF YOU LIVE IN WARD 5.**

ALL OTHER POLLING PLACES WILL REMAIN THE SAME, TO-WIT:

WARD 1 VOTERS-- VOTE @ THE WALTER BRUCE COMMUNITY CENTER
82 MARTIN LUTHER KING

WARD 2 VOTERS-- VOTE @ THE OLD LIBERTY HILL CHURCH
50 ATTALA STREET

WARD 3 VOTERS-- VOTE @ THE FIRE BAY IN THE DURANT CITY HALL
253 W. MULBERRY STREET

WARD 4 VOTERS-- VOTE IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM IN THE DURANT CITY HALL
253 W. MULBERRY STREET

THE PRIMARY ELECTION DATE IN DURANT WILL BE APRIL 6, 2021 FOR ALL QUALIFIED MUNICIPAL VOTERS. **VOTERS WHO ARE NOT REGISTERED TO VOTE IN THE CITY OF DURANT WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN THE APRIL 6 MUNICIPAL ELECTION.**

IF QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT URSULA PERRY, CITY CLERK IN DURANT @ 662/653-3314, EXT. 201