

# Ways to combat yard pests

A beautiful yard or garden can sometimes attract more than just admiration from neighbors. It can also draw the attention of small wildlife looking for an easy meal or a comfortable place to live. While many animals are harmless visitors, some common yard pests—such as voles and squirrels—can cause surprising damage to lawns, flower beds, and gardens if left unchecked.

Voies are small rodents that are often mistaken for mice, but their behavior is quite different. These animals live primarily underground and are known for creating shallow tunnels just beneath the surface of the soil. Homeowners often first notice their presence when they see narrow runways in the grass or small holes scattered throughout the yard. Voies feed on plant roots, bulbs, bark, and garden vegetables, which means they can quietly damage landscaping before anyone realizes what is happening.

One of the most common signs of vole activity is damage to ornamental plants and young trees. During the colder months, voies sometimes chew the bark around the base of trees and shrubs. This can weaken or even kill plants if the damage circles the trunk completely. In gardens, they may eat the roots

of flowers and vegetables, causing plants to suddenly wilt or collapse.

Squirrels, on the other hand, are far more visible. These energetic animals are often entertaining to watch as they leap from tree branches or race along fences, but they can also be frustrating for gardeners. Squirrels frequently dig in flower beds and containers while searching for buried nuts or hiding food for later. In the process, they may uproot newly planted flowers, disturb bulbs, or scatter mulch across the yard.

In vegetable gardens, squirrels may nibble on tomatoes, peppers, and other produce before it has a chance to be harvested. They are also known for stealing seeds and digging up newly planted bulbs. A single squirrel may not seem like a major problem, but several of them working together can quickly undo hours of careful planting.

Fortunately, there are several simple strategies that can help homeowners protect their yards. Keeping grass trimmed and garden areas tidy can reduce the shelter that voies prefer. Removing piles of brush, wood, or tall weeds eliminates hiding places where they might



build nests. Protective barriers such as wire mesh placed around the base of young trees can also prevent bark damage.

To discourage squirrels, gardeners can use physical barriers like garden netting or small fences around vulnerable plants. Planting bulbs beneath a layer of wire mesh can prevent squirrels from digging them up while still allowing the plants to grow through.

A healthy yard naturally attracts wildlife, and most homeowners enjoy sharing their outdoor spaces with birds and other animals. With a few preventative steps, it is possible to maintain that balance while keeping gardens and landscaping protected from the most common yard pests.

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