

Mice, Moles, Voles and Gophers

Of all the critters burrowing around in our gardens, the gophers, mice and voles do the most damage to garden plants and shrubs, especially bulbs. While moles may seem more destructive (digging extensive tunnels that are evident on the surface of the soil) they are insectivores, dining almost exclusively on worms, grubs and insects. It is the other critters who use the mole-runs to access your garden plants and bulbs who actually do damage.

As with squirrels, you may have to try several methods to protect your garden plants and bulbs from mice, voles and gophers. Just like squirrels, they seldom eat daffodils and other rodent-proof bulbs, but they love tulips.

The most effective repellents seem to be things that smell bad. If you can find the paths the critters run in, try putting in some **Dried Blood Meal**, human hair or used kitty litter (cats are their mortal enemies).

Most ground dwellers are sensitive to vibrations; try a few whirligigs. **Castor oil** (available at pharmacies) and repellents that contain castor oil are effective repellents for many ground dwellers.

For smaller areas, use a mixture of 1-tablespoon castor oil, 1-tablespoon liquid soap and 1-gallon of water. Mix the ingredients in a watering can and pour it over the area. You may need to reapply after several rains.

Products such as **Hot Pepper Wax** and **REPELS-ALL** can be used on the bulbs as you plant them to make them taste nasty to the critters. There is also poisonous bait called **Moletox** that can be put into the tunnels/runs to control moles.



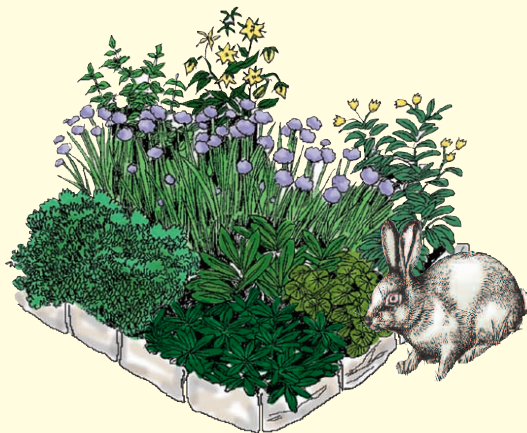
Rabbits

Rabbits love to nibble on garden plants, vegetables and various bulbs as their flowers emerge and they can make you especially mad, since they often just nip off the buds and then leave them there.

Dried Blood Meal is often effective for repelling rabbits, plus it's an organic source of nitrogen. **Hot Pepper Wax** or **REPELS-ALL Animal Repellent** can safely be sprayed directly onto the plants and new growth to repel rabbits by taste.

Fencing can be effective, but it needs to have openings no larger than one inch (to keep the baby rabbits out), be at least knee high and fixed tightly to the ground along its entire length or securely buried at least eight inches or deeper to prevent rabbits from squeezing under and getting to protected plants.

You may have to try several strategies to keep the rabbits from bothering your garden plants and flower bulbs. As with squirrels, deer and other rodents, rabbits will not bother bulbs that taste bad or are poisonous such as daffodils, allium, fritillaria, galanthus, leucojum and others.



Recommended products

- Critter Ridder
- Hot Pepper Wax Animal Repellent
- MOLETOX Mole and Gopher Killer
- REPELS-ALL Animal Repellents
- Dried Blood Meal

Protecting Plants and Bulbs from Critters

Techniques for preventing garden damage from squirrels, deer, rabbits and other animals



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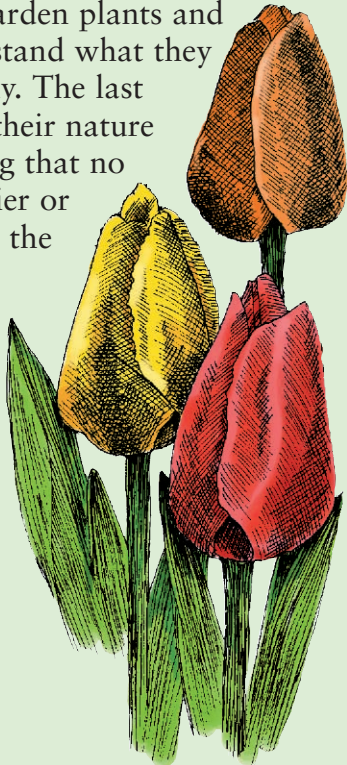


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Protecting Garden Plants and Bulbs from Squirrels and Other Critters



Between squirrels and other animals such as moles, deer and rabbits, having a beautiful garden and bulb display can be challenging and frustrating. Fortunately, there are several steps you can take to outwit these critters. The first step to preventing them from damaging your garden plants and bulbs is to understand what they are doing and why. The last step is accepting their nature and understanding that no matter what barrier or repellent you use, the animals are not going to choose starvation. With some careful planning and patience you can outwit these critters and have a beautiful bulb garden.



About Repellents

The animal repellents we recommend prevent grazing, nibbling, chewing, gnawing and browsing damage to plants and property. Most contain organic or natural ingredients and will not harm the pest animal, pets or non-target wildlife. They are environmentally safe, biodegradable and won't harm garden plants or bulbs. However, please carefully read and follow all label directions before using any repellents to get the best results. Some of our recommendations (such as dried blood meal, which is an organic fertilizer) are considered a "home remedies" and are not labeled as repellents but are known to be effective for repelling animals when applied to and around plants and bulbs. If you are not sure how to use a recommended repellent please don't hesitate to ask our staff for help.

Squirrels

Squirrels are determined, agile and curious creatures. Bulbs (especially tulips) are a favorite food, probably second only to nuts. Many gardeners spend hours putting in tulips only to find the area dug up and their bulbs gone the next day.

Squirrels can smell the fresh bulbs in the ground; they are also interested to see what you are burying. Be fastidious and clean up any of the dried, papery coverings (tunics) that fall off your bulbs during planting. Thoroughly remove any debris that might be a signal that bulbs were recently planted.

A combination of tactics may be required to outwit squirrels. You can cover the area with chicken wire, creating a barrier to prevent digging. Or, try placing a big saucer or board over the newly-planted bed. Surface barriers need to stay in place until the ground freezes but must be removed before the bulbs sprout in spring.

Planting bulbs a few inches deeper than recommended will often deter a squirrel, making it more difficult for them to dig up.

Success can be had with repellents such as **Dried Blood Meal**, **Critter Ridder**, **REPELS-ALL** or **Hot Pepper Wax Animal Repellent**. Another trick is to dip the bulbs in **Hot Pepper Wax** or other repellents before planting them.

If you just can't get the squirrels to leave your tulips alone, try planting rodent-resistant bulbs such as daffodils, allium, fritillaria, galanthus and leucojum – squirrels don't like them.

Squirrel damage to bulbs is a fall problem; once the bulbs have been in the ground all winter, squirrels seem to leave them alone. However, come spring they may become interested in new growth, especially tender buds and flowers. Squirrels are also known to nibble on the tender, sweet flower buds of rhododendrons and other spring flowering shrubs. Additional applications of repellents may be needed in spring on a variety of garden plants to protect them.

A Word About Trapping:

As a last resort, squirrels and other critters such as raccoons and opossums can be trapped and relocated, but this is a difficult and dangerous job that might be best left to licensed professionals. Check with your County Health Department for regulations and permits concerning the transport of wild animals.

Deer

Deer can be voracious eaters of garden plants, trees and shrubs, especially tulip, crocus, iris and wood hyacinth blossoms in the spring. Just as the buds open, they are gone.

Fortunately, deer don't like many of the same bulbs that squirrels and rodents don't

like, such as daffodils and alliums. Deer tend to be repelled by things that smell and taste bad to them. There are many bad tasting, toxic and odorous garden plants as well as plants with thorns, prickles and other



natural protection that deer don't like. Some of the most effective smelly repellents are **Dried Blood Meal**, strongly scented bar soaps, **Milorganite** and human hair. The most effective deer repellents contain rotten (putrescent) whole egg solid ingredients. **REPELS-ALL Animal Repellents** is our best deer repellents. Keep in mind that repellents need to be reapplied after heavy rains.

Some deer are also scared away by strips of Mylar tape that flutter in the wind, lights with motion detectors or radios that are triggered by motion. Fences are effective if they are tall enough.

Deer prefer to feed in wilder places, but the pressure to find food can make them extremely bold, walking right into urban landscapes, ignoring repellents and deterrents.

When all else fails, plant what deer don't like to eat. Deer will often ignore bulbs that are known to be rodent-resistant such as daffodils, allium, fritillaria, galanthus, leucojum and others.

For more information about deer-resistant plants for your garden, see *Gardening In Deer Country*, by our own Vincent Drzewucki, Jr., Brick Tower Press.

