

Go on the offensive against foraging four-legged critters

As most gardeners learn, sooner or later one person's flower fantasy is just a free feast to some furry friend.

Animal pest problems occur in all seasons of the garden, but fall and spring are peak periods for plunder. Luckily, these seasons, fall in particular, are also the best times for beleaguered gardeners to mount a defense against foraging four-legged critters such as deer, squirrels, rabbits, voles, moles, and other assorted animal pests.

In fall, a good garden clean-up tops the list of animal deterrents. After fall bulb planting, remove planting debris to rob squirrels of scent clues. (It's scent, after all, that guides them to their hidden stashes and to yours!) They're not relying on such memory cues as "three hops from the big tree on the left."

Also consider mulch. Mulch is useful to help retain soil moisture and maintain more constant cool soil temperatures. Apply mulch after weather turns cold. Mulching too soon only satisfies small creatures who find earth-warmed mulch a great cozy place for winter tunneling and nesting.

The Enemy

What exactly is nibbling the nasturtiums and devouring the daisies? Increasingly, in America, the culprits are likely to be deer. According to the New York Times, "There are now more deer in the U.S. than when the pilgrims landed in 1620." A population of 27 million deer ranges across the land. And, increasingly, as the deer's natural habitats are reduced by development, they've leapt into our backyards in what amounts, in some parts of the country, to a suburban invasion.

Deer are the greatest threat in the spring when, after a hungry winter, they look for anything green, young, and tasty.

Rabbits have long been the vegetable gardener's nemesis, but they're happy to taste-test anything new and tender looking.

Squirrels and chipmunks are particular pests at fall flower bulb planting time. Count on them to

spaced about three feet apart are recommended. (Don't worry, the deer see two fences and won't jump, so they won't get caught inside.)

Garden centers and other retailers carry various types of plastic fencing and netting that might be appropriate. It is also possible to have an electric anti-deer fence installed, but this isn't recommended in areas with small children or close neighbors.

For critters such as ground-hogs, fences don't need to be high and they need to be deep. About three feet deep should do the trick. Chicken wire is another favorite barrier material. This can be used to form either a cage over blooming young plants or an underground cage in which to protect bulbs from burrowers. It's perfectly acceptable to place a sheet of chicken wire directly on top of the planting. The bulbs will be smart enough to find their way through it.

Some people take a casual (but very effective) approach when preparing to find their way through it.

- Egg mixtures, either the commercially available kind, or "home brewed." The idea is rotten eggs to offend the animals.
- Sensory deterrents
- Vegetative deterrents
- Animal deterrents
- If you can't beat 'em, join 'em

Barriers are the most straightforward, and many say the most effective, deterrents. The strategy is to make it impossible for the critter to get to his dinner. For deer, a fence is the best deterrent at a high one. A deer fence should be at least seven and a half feet high. An additional overhang of chicken wire is a good idea. The most effective deer fence is a double fence. Deer can either jump very high or very wide but can't do both at once. Two fences (one high and one moderately high)

just throw on an old window screen after planting and take it up once the ground has settled or frozen.

Sensory Deterrents

Of course with all the fencing and caging, some people think they are turning their garden into an outdoor Alcatraz. Here is another option.

Sensory deterrents seek to dissuade the unwanted garden diner by offending his sense of smell or taste or exciting his sense of fear and caution. Some suitable ones for squirrels, other small creatures, and deer include:

- Scattering clippings of human hair around (not always a good idea in urban settings where squirrels may associate the smell of a human with food hand-outs).
- Predator smells, such as lion's dung, urine from the zoo, or other commercially available predator scents.

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Resilient flooring offers new style options

Resilient flooring should not be confused with your grandmother's old linoleum kitchen floor. Resilient is made from new and different materials, and manufacturers are applying their technology savvy to create innovative designs, style and construction to fit a broader spectrum of consumer tastes.

When shopping for a floor to complement your decorating needs, take a good look at resilient. Following are commonly asked questions with answers that will help you better understand resilient flooring products, and how they can create a beautiful atmosphere in your home.

How can I determine that resilient flooring is the right fit for my home?

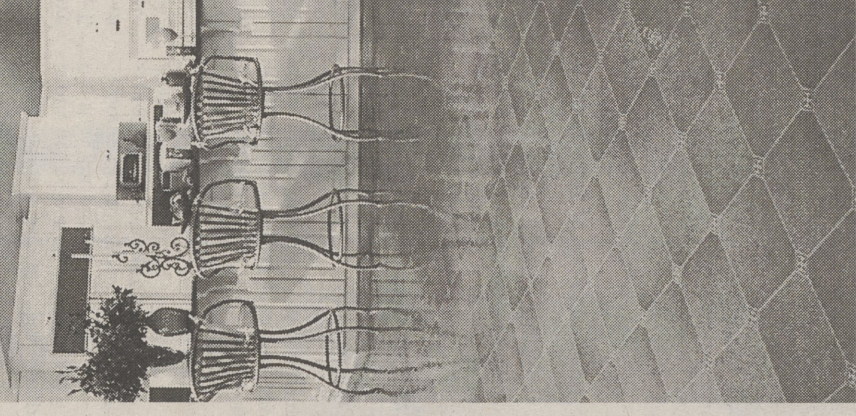
- Resilient is the answer when you want affordable flooring without having to sacrifice style and design. Resilient flooring is extremely durable, making it perfect for children and pets. Falling objects won't shatter, grout lines won't crack and trap dirt; the floor won't buckle from water; it does not have to be stained or refinished; it is soft underfoot; and it maintains a lower noise level.
- How is resilient flooring different from linoleum?

Linoleum and resilient are often confused by many consumers. However, resilient and linoleum are two entirely different products. Linoleum is developed from linseed oil and ground cork, while resilient can be made from a variety of materials depending on whether the floor is rotogravure or inlaid.

What room is most suitable for resilient flooring?

Resilient can be used in any room you prefer. It is the best choice for the busiest rooms in your home, and for the busiest people who don't have a lot of time to spend cleaning the floor. Aside from kitchens, resilient wood plank is perfect for dining rooms or dens, and resilient tile is an ideal choice for bathrooms.

- Will resilient flooring stain, scratch or dull?
- The recent technology of resilient flooring has eliminated concerns about staining, scratching and dulling. Depending on the type of floor purchased, its wearlayers will vary. With the proper care, most wear-layers are resistant to factors such as stains, scratching and dulling.
- If flooring is being installed in a large area will there be seams?



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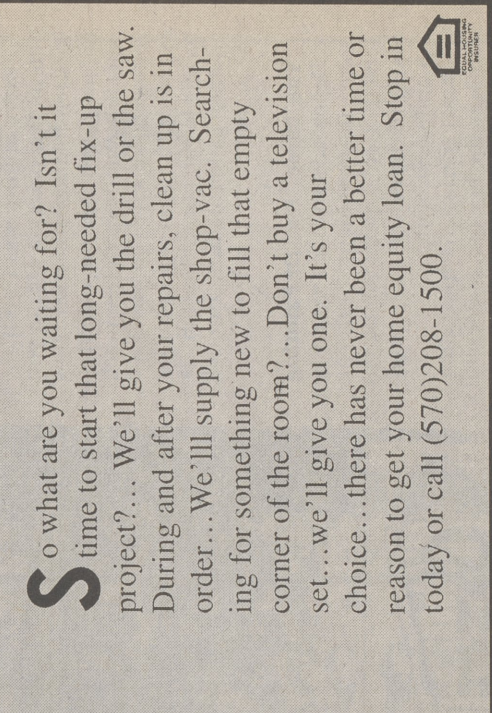
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