

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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“Rascally Rabbits in the Garden”

Rabbits are a common invader of home gardens, especially when plants flower in the spring. Fortunately, there are plenty of common-sense ways to keep the critters out. Rabbits gravitate to young vegetables and flowers this time of year. However, some vegetables are rarely bothered. This includes potatoes, tomatoes, corn, squash, cucumbers, and some peppers.

Here are some prevention options:

Fencing – This is often the quickest and easiest method of control. One suggestion is that the fence be at least two feet tall with a fine mesh of one inch or less. Fencing support can be provided by a variety of products, including electric fence posts. However, fencing may not be a viable choice based on the desired appearance of the garden.

Floating Row Cover – This is a light woven material that can be placed over plants yet still allows light, water and air to come through. It is most often used to promote early growth by keeping plants warmer than normal, it can also help protect plants from insects and wildlife.

Repellants – Although commonly suggested for rabbit control, repellants must be re-applied frequently. Some can also be poisonous and cannot be used on plants intended for human consumption.

Trapping – Live traps are usually recommended when the rabbit can be moved to a rural area several miles away from where they are initially caught. A number of baits can be used to entice the rabbit to enter the trap, including a tightly rolled cabbage leaf held together by a toothpick. However, rabbits often avoid baits if other attractive food is available.

Sprinkler – A motion-activated sprinkler can be attached to a garden hose, releasing a short burst of water upon motion. Pick a product that advertises it can protect at least 1,000 square feet. Some products are available from Contech, Orbit, and Havahart.

Information comes from Kansas State University horticulture expert, Cynthia Domenghini.

Join us and the NRCS office for a Pasture Walk out at Phillips Cabin on June 5th at 9:30 am. We'll take a short ride to the prairie, do some native plant and Kansas bird ID, and discuss noxious weed control. Please register by June 3 to be included in the free Lunch list by calling 620-583-5544 Ext. 3. On June 11th from 1 – 5 pm, in Emporia, there will be an Emerald Ash Borer Workshop to discuss the growing concern of their spread into our area. Check out our Extension page to register and for more information.