

Brewer Park Community Garden Groundhog Management

Last summer, the resident groundhog population in and around the garden flourished (which is putting it nicely). Unfortunately, several plots were raided throughout the summer and should we run into similar challenges this year, we wanted to offer some information to help manage the problem.

We see this issue as any other pest-control matter and helping to address it is a shared responsibility amongst the Executive, Maintenance Committee and individual members. We can work together to make the garden less attractive for them to want to live in the garden.



"I saw my shadow. It made me look fat."

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What we won't be doing is trapping and relocating groundhogs. Trapping wildlife is not encouraged by the City, and relocating further than 1km away is illegal in Ontario under the *Ministry of Natural Resources' Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*. Also, the numbers were such that it was safe to assume that moving one family out would make way for another to move into its place.

What we can do

We can make the garden less inviting to live and feast in!

The Maintenance Committee will ensure that the area around the shed is secure so they can't create dens under it this year.

As a gardener, your first line of defence should be to **reinforce your plot**. Groundhogs cannot climb high so barriers like the plastic or wire netting and hoop structures used in the garden are good options to secure your plot. Netting should be at least 3 feet high and make sure there are no gaps at the bottom. There is a lot of extra netting in the shed should you wish to make repairs or adjustments. This simple solution should be enough to keep them from eating your vegetables.

Our members have found that fencing is the best line of defence, as well as spreading cayenne pepper and garlic around plots.

There are also endless sources of additional remedies online to discourage wildlife. The City of Ottawa recommends contacting the [Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary](#) or the [Ottawa Carleton Wildlife Centre](#) for information on many wildlife issues, including animals digging in or eating gardens.

For animals nesting under a deck or shed, the Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary [recommends](#):

- place a few rocks down the hole but do not block the entryway as you will trap animals inside
- dig the hole a little bigger to imitate a predator
- keep the area well mowed to prevent hiding spots
- hang pie plates around the hole to startle the animal
- put used cat litter or ammonia-soaked rags down the hole
- put a crumpled piece of newspaper in the hole so you will know when the animal has moved out

[To discourage animals from eating in your garden](#), Ottawa Carleton Wildlife Centre recommends that tactics are most effective when you use as many as possible and overwhelm the animal with bad tastes and smells. Start early in the season and be consistent for at least two weeks (don't forget to refresh after heavy watering or rain!):

- Blood meal fertilizer (on topsoil)
- Dog hair (in nylon stocking on sticks around the garden)
- Garlic and onion powder (sprinkle around plants)
- Talcum powder (mix with water and spray on plants) citrus (lemon juice or slices placed around plants)

If you are interested in what other community gardens are doing to address this problem, our friends at Just Foods shared this photo of gardeners at the Strathcona Community Garden using old oven grates as barriers around their ground plots:



Please get in touch if you have questions, concerns or other ideas to share.

- Brewer Park Community Garden Executive