



Deterring Critters from Your Garden **UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County**

Have you followed all the Master Gardener's advice regarding soil amendments, conserving water, planting vegetables and fruits that are appropriate for your elevation, and using sustainable gardening practices? Are you thinking that all that is left to do is to enjoy the fruits of your labor? You should think again! The neighborhood rodents, birds, and rabbits have plans to harvest your bounty while you are sleeping!

There are three methods that can be used to discourage critters from getting to your precious fruits and vegetables before you do. These methods include the use of good sanitation practices, protective netting or exclusionary fencing, and frightening devices.

Good sanitation practices involve keeping your yard and garden free of garbage, over-ripe fruits and vegetables, as well as pet food, so as not to attract marauding animals. Remove rotting fruits and vegetables from the ground around orchards and gardens, and store pet food in tightly closed containers. If possible, pets should be fed indoors. If pets are fed outside, try to provide only the amount of food they will eat at a single feeding. Animal-proof compost bins can be used to discourage raccoons and rats from being attracted to your yard.

Protective netting and exclusionary caging can be used to prevent access to critters who want to make three square meals a day out of your fruit and vegetable harvest. You can prevent access of birds to ripening fruit on trees and vines by placing 1/4-inch to 1/2-inch mesh plastic netting over plants. It is best to attach the netting to a frame that holds it away from the tree to discourage critters from accessing produce at the outer edge of the canopy.

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Exclusionary cages can be constructed of small gauge wire and wood. Hinged doors can be included to allow humans to have easy access to ripe produce. Example of these can be found at the [Master Gardener of El Dorado County's Sherwood Demonstration Garden](#) in Placerville (see below for days and times of operation), which has a number of cages that have been constructed to minimize the intrusion of critters into the vegetable garden.

Frightening devices are used to deter critters once they find your garden. Frightening devices include the old-fashioned floppy-armed scarecrow, Mylar streamers, balloons with scare-eyes, and motion-activated sprinklers. Some critters, particularly birds, become used to a particular device, so it has been found to be effective to mix up the types of devices, their locations, and the times of day when they are activated.

Hopefully, one of these strategies will help you deter hungry critters from your harvest so you can rightfully enjoy the fruits of your labor.

References:

University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Integrated Pest Management Program Pest Notes Publications 74152, 7438, 7433, 7477, and 74106

Currently we are in phase 2 resumption of activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Master Gardener events will for the foreseeable future be limited. Please see our calendar of events for learning opportunities. We realize our public classes are valued by County residents and we especially appreciate your continued support and understanding during this public health challenge.

We do have some good news--the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, is open to the public, from 9 AM to noon on Fridays and Saturdays. State and county public health guidelines require us to limit visitors to ten at a time (including our docents) and ask that they practice social distancing and wear face coverings. Restrooms will not be open. Check http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden for more information. Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard remotely and can still answer your questions. Leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512, or use the "Ask a Master Gardener" option on our website: mgeldorado.ucanr.edu. We'll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Stay safe and follow recommended health and sanitation practices in the coming weeks.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see <http://ucanr.edu/mastergardener> e-news.