

Squirrel, Eastern Grey (Sciuridae carolinensis)



Squirrels are the most familiar member of the rodent family that most people see. Squirrels bury food in the ground then later use their sense of smell to find the food. Squirrels' teeth grow continuously and to prevent over-growth, they gnaw to keep their teeth sharp. They have two litters a year, first born between February and April and the next between August and September.

Damage

Squirrels damage gardens by digging to bury their food or by eating all or parts of plants and garden fruits. They will dig up and eat freshly planted seeds, consume blossoms and damage fruits. Seedlings may be eaten, also entire plants are sometimes cut off. They can eat the spring buds of trees and will dig up freshly planted tulip and crocus bulbs.

When Are They Active

They are mainly active during the day especially early morning and late afternoon. They do not hibernate in winter but are less active in bad weather.

Susceptible Plants

Numerous plants are susceptible to damage. The spring buds of trees as well as the bark, nuts and fruits of trees, will be eaten by these squirrels. They enjoy freshly planted vegetable seeds, tulips and crocus bulbs. Favorites in the home vegetable garden include tomatoes, squash, beans and eggplants. They will not bother allium, daffodils, squills, grape hyacinths or crown imperial bulbs.

Prevention Methods

Spring flowering bulbs can be protected by placing anchored chicken wire over the planted area. Exclude them from plantings with row covers, bird netting, hardware cloth and chicken wire. Discourage digging by mulching bare soil, especially around newly planted seedlings.

Treatment Methods

Repellent products with the active ingredient of capsaicin or oil of mustard can be sprayed on plants but must be reapplied after rain.

Additional Information/Resources

- Wikipedia [Tree Squirrel](#)
- Forest Preserve District of DuPage County [Tree Squirrels](#)
- Dane County UW Extension Horticulture Hotline [608-224-3721](tel:608-224-3721) (M-F, 9 am-12 noon, April 15 – October 31) or horticulture@countyofdane.com

