

Woodchuck/Groundhog (Marmota monax)



Damage

Woodchucks are diggers. They can quickly turn a manicured garden into a mess of freshly dug earth. In the garden they may extensively damage or make off with a wide variety of plants and fruits. They gnaw and claw fruit trees and ornamental shrubs.

When Are They Active

They are most active in early morning and early evening. They are primarily active during the daytime preferring early morning and evening hours for feeding. They mostly stay in fields but are also excellent climbers. In the winter, they hibernate typically from October to March or April. Usually burrows are found in gardens in the spring.

Susceptible Plants

Woodchucks are mostly vegetarian and feed on a variety of fruits and green plants including vegetables, grasses and legumes. They can damage peas, beans, corn, carrots, lettuce, apples and other garden crops. They may also eat flowers, insects, and the bark of young trees.

Prevention/Control Methods

Fencing is the most effective way to protect vegetable gardens from woodchucks and has the advantage of keeping other animals out as well. Mesh fencing with the lower edge buried 10-12 inches in the ground discourages burrowing. Fencing should have an outward projecting lip to discourage climbing. Fences should be erected in the spring before feeding activity begins. Harassment techniques such as a scarecrow, a motion-activated device that sprays water, makes noise or uses lights have proven effective. Rotate harassment techniques to keep the woodchuck off guard. Cultural practices which modify the habitat include eliminating brush piles and overgrown areas.

Additional Information/Resources

- Professional Wildlife Removal Directory [Woodchuck/Groundhog Removal](#)
- Woodchuck Ecology & Damage Management ([G3997-007](#))
- Cornell Cooperative Extension [Woodchuck fact sheet](#)
- Dane County UW Extension Horticulture Hotline [608-224-3721](#) (M-F, 9 am-12 noon, April 15 – October 31) or horticulture@countyofdane.com