
Getting to Know Woodchucks



Woodchucks, also known as groundhogs or whistle pigs, are harmless, comical vegetarians who are commonly seen in suburban backyards and along roadways. Conflicts usually arise over who gets to eat the garden vegetables! Suburban landscapes provide the perfect habitat for woodchucks. Our raised decks provide cover and a perfect place to raise young, and our lush lawns provide a virtual buffet. Most woodchuck conflicts occur in spring and summer, just when birthing season has begun. That's why problems need to be solved in a way that doesn't leave orphaned young behind.

What's Inside?

Inside this pamphlet you'll find some tips for coexisting with woodchucks, including how to help keep woodchucks out of your garden.

Our Mission

The goal of the Mercer County Wildlife Center is to protect the future of native wildlife species through education, rehabilitation, and release.

Safety Concerns

Woodchucks are harmless vegetarians who flee when scared. Remember that even a small child looks like a giant predator to the woodchuck. There is no cause for alarm—healthy woodchucks simply don't attack children or pets. If chased, woodchucks will quickly flee to their burrows.

Woodchucks have a higher susceptibility to rabies than other rodents, yet the incidence of rabies in woodchucks is still very low. Woodchucks are much more susceptible to the roundworm brain parasite, which causes symptoms that look exactly like rabies. Roundworm is not airborne—it can only be transmitted by ingesting an infected animal's feces.



Want to Learn More?

A big "thank you" to The Fund for Animals for providing the information in this pamphlet. For more details about woodchucks, visit The Fund for Animals web site at www.fund.org and link to their Coexisting with Wildlife Fact Sheet #4, Solving Woodchuck Problems.

Mercer County Wildlife Center



Coexisting with Woodchucks



It's true that these primarily vegetarian creatures have a taste for garden delights, but did you know they also eat dandelions and other weeds?

P.O. Box 161
Titusville, NJ 08560
(609) 883-6606

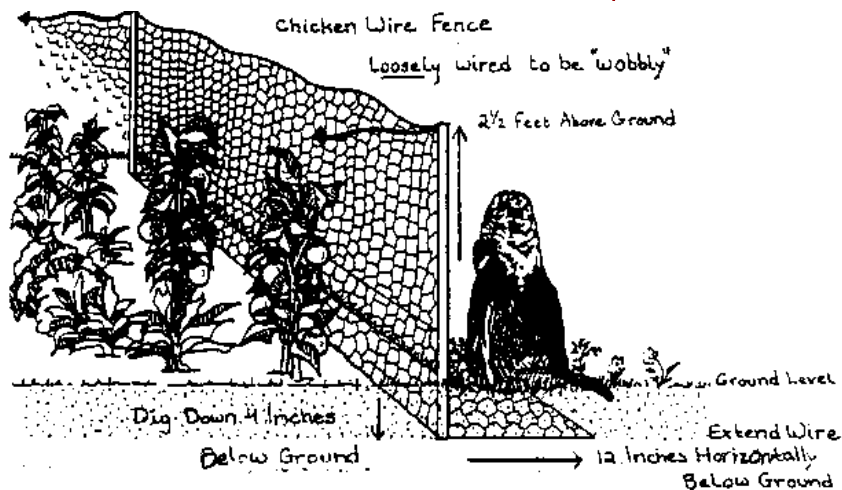
www.mercercounty.org/mcwc/mcwc.htm

Coexisting with Woodchucks

Keeping Them Out of Your Garden

The best way to exclude woodchucks from your garden is to put up a simple chicken wire or mesh fence. All you need is a roll of 4-foot high chicken wire and some wooden stakes. This fence should:

- **Be wobbly:** The top portion of the fence only needs to be 2-1/2 to 3 feet high but it should be staked loosely so that it has some “give” and wobbles. This will discourage the woodchuck from climbing the fence. The woodchuck will try digging under the fence instead, bringing us to the second fence requirement:



- **Extend beneath the ground:** Extend your mesh fence 4 inches straight down into the ground, then bend it and extend it another 8-12 inches outward, away from the garden as shown in the diagram below. This “L” shape creates a false bottom that will deter the woodchuck from digging beneath the fence. You can also put this L-shaped flap on top of the ground, but be sure to secure it firmly with landscaping staples or the woodchuck will go under it.

If you don't want to put up a fence, try these deterrents:

- **Blood meal fertilizer:** Put blood meal fertilizer around the perimeter of your garden.
- **Cayenne pepper:** Sprinkle cayenne pepper around the plants, and spray the plants themselves with a taste repellent such as Ropel every two weeks. You can find Ropel and other taste repellents at your local garden store.

Evicting Them From:

- **Under a deck or shed:** Woodchucks don't undermine foundations

and really aren't likely to damage your shed. In spring and summer, the woodchuck under your deck or shed is probably a mother nursing her young, which is why we encourage you to consider leaving them alone. Be sure you really need to evict the woodchuck before taking action. If you must, put some dirty kitty litter down the woodchuck burrow—the urinated part acts as a predator odor, which often causes the entire family to leave. Ammonia-sprinkled rags or sweaty socks placed in the burrow may also cause them to leave.

What About Humane Traps?

Trapping won't solve the problem. If you have a woodchuck in your yard, you have a good woodchuck habitat. If you eliminate one, another will quickly move into its place. Relocating a woodchuck may cause its death or—if trapped between May and August—the death of the young that may be left behind.

In addition, it's against the law in New Jersey to trap and relocate wildlife.

It's better to learn to accept woodchucks that inhabit your yard and use the measures outlined in this pamphlet to minimize the damage to your gardens.