

# COMMON TIPS FOR RACCOON PREVENTION

## Tips to keep raccoons out of your yard and home

When raccoons venture into your yard, they're looking for three things: food, water, and shelter. If they can't find any, they'll have no reason to stick around. So, the best way to prevent raccoons in your yard is to make sure they won't find what they're looking for.

But when you already have raccoons on your property, you can still repel them with certain scents and other methods. Follow these tips to "raccoon-proof" your yard as much as possible.

### Secure trash cans

A raccoon's number one food source on your property is your trash can. These critters are smarter than you think, and they'll knock over your garbage can or open the lid to get to the tasty morsels inside.

To prevent this, keep your trash cans sealed tight. Get a lock for the lid, tie it down with bungee cords, or place heavy weights such as cinder blocks on top. If possible, keep garbage cans inside a garage or shed, and keep the door closed at night. The less accessible your trash is, the better.

Even if raccoons can't get to your trash, the smell of it may attract them. When throwing out particularly smelly waste, such as raw meat, seal it in a plastic bag first to contain the odor.

### Remove possible food sources

Aside from the garbage, raccoons might find food in bird feeders, pet food bowls, or just on the ground if you have trees that produce nuts or fruits. Locate all possible food sources on your property and remove them if you want the raccoons to stay away.

**For bird feeders:** Raccoons are nocturnal, so if you bring your bird feeders inside at night, raccoons won't get to them. Alternatively, you can hang the bird feeder from a thin pole that raccoons can't climb or install a raccoon guard around the bottom of the pole.

**For pet food bowls:** Never leave pet food out overnight. The best thing would be to feed your pets inside (or in the garage), but if that isn't an option, make sure you bring their bowls inside before it gets dark.

**For nut and fruit trees:** Clean up fallen fruit and nuts as soon as possible, preferably every day. You never know which night is the night raccoons will show up looking for a feast.

## Protect your fruits and veggies

If you have a vegetable garden, berry bush, or fruit tree in your yard, it could be another major food source for your local raccoons. You probably don't want to get rid of your garden just to prevent raccoons, but you can still put up a barrier to keep them away.

## Block access to hiding places

Raccoons like to take shelter in dark, enclosed spaces. That includes spots like the crawl space beneath a deck or porch, under the roots of a large tree, or anywhere with brush thick enough to provide cover.

Identify any hidey holes on your property that would make a good home for raccoons, and either get rid of them or put up a barrier so the raccoons can't get in. Block off spaces beneath your home with wire mesh, sheet metal, or another durable material that the raccoons can't easily tear up. Keep bushes neat and trimmed to reduce cover.

## Eliminate water sources

While you inspect your property for potential food sources and hiding spots, check for things the raccoons might use as a watering hole, as well. Do you have a swimming pool, koi pond, bird bath, or other water feature, for example? Or is there any bin or container in your yard that might fill with water when it rains?

If you have a raccoon problem, you should keep water features (including swimming pools) covered with a durable material, at least at nighttime. This is especially important for fish ponds — raccoons won't only drink the water, they'll go fishing, too!

If you successfully get rid of all sources of food, water, and shelter, raccoons will no longer have any reason to hang out in your yard.

## Scent repellents

Raccoons have a strong sense of smell, which they use to sniff out your trash from miles away. But you can use their keen noses to your advantage. There are many pungent smells that will mess up their senses and act as raccoon repellents.

Here are some smells raccoons hate and how you can use them in your yard:

- **Store-bought deterrents:** There are many products you can buy online or at your local garden center designed to repel wildlife such as raccoons. They usually come in the form of liquid sprays.
- **Predator urine:** The scent of urine from predators — such as wolves, coyotes, or bobcats — fools raccoons into thinking your property is unsafe. Believe it or not, you can easily find predator urine for pest control online and at some garden centers. Whatever predator is most common in your area, use that animal's urine. The scent of a familiar predator will be most effective at keeping raccoons away.
- **Vinegar:** You can dilute the vinegar with water to make it go farther or use straight vinegar for a stronger smell. Either way, put the liquid in a spray bottle and spray it around your property.
- **Ammonia:** Purchase ammonia (a chemical contained in urine) online or from a home improvement store that sells pest control solutions. Soak rags in the ammonia and place them around your property or leave out uncovered bowls of ammonia.
- **Garlic:** Crush garlic cloves and leave them in containers around your property or mix garlic juice with water to create a repellent spray.
- **Cayenne pepper:** Generously sprinkle dry cayenne pepper around areas where raccoons might frequent or mix one full can of cayenne pepper with a gallon of water to make a spray.
- **Blood meal:** Purchase blood meal, a powder made of dried animal blood, online or from a home improvement store. Generously sprinkle the powder around your property.
- **Cucumber plants:** Try growing cucumber plants in your garden. Raccoons hate the smell of them, and as an added bonus, you get to eat them! Plant cucumbers around the border of your garden to keep raccoons from messing with the other veggies.
- **Irish Spring soap:** Grate bars of Irish Spring soap into flakes or break them into chunks. Spread the flakes or chunks generously around your property.
- **Peppermint oil:** Mix several drops of peppermint essential oil with water to create a repellent spray. You also could spray straight peppermint oil for a stronger scent, but that would get expensive very quickly.
- **Epsom salt:** Generously sprinkle Epsom salt around your property.

You don't have to douse your entire yard with these scents to irritate the raccoons' noses and send them packing. Apply the scents near food sources, enclosed spaces, and other spots you might expect to find raccoons. You also can apply the scents around the perimeter of your property to create a kind of border.

**Important to note:** Raccoon deterrent scents don't last forever. For lasting results, you'll have to reapply the scents every few days. For this reason, scent repellents aren't a reasonable long-term solution. But they can be good for running the raccoons off your property, giving you a chance to secure your trash cans, clean up your yard, trim

bushes, and generally make your property less appealing to the raccoons so they won't have any reason to come back.

**Warning for pet owners:** Just like these scents irritate raccoons, they irritate cats, dogs, and other outdoor pets. Your pets may not want to go outside with these smells in the yard.

## Motion-activated lights and sprinklers

Motion-activated lights and sprinkler jets are usually easy to install, and they can be effective for scaring off raccoons. Place these motion-activated deterrents in strategic locations where the raccoons are sure to set them off, such as next to your trash cans or under your deck.

## Sonic deterrent devices

Sonic pest repellers are electronic devices that emit a high-pitched sound which human can't hear but drives animals crazy. These devices are designed to keep away many types of wildlife pests, not just raccoons. The sound may temporarily disorient the animals but won't cause lasting harm.

**Warning for pet owners:** Sonic pest repellers will disorient your pets when they go outside, too. However, the sound doesn't travel through walls, so it shouldn't bother pets as long as they're indoors.

## How to keep raccoons out of your home

When raccoons are regulars in your yard, the worst-case scenario is that they get inside your home and stay there. But there are steps you can take to secure your home and keep raccoons out.

**Seal entrances:** Seal or cover all possible entry points into your home. That includes dog or cat doors, vents, and even your chimney (which you can cover with metal mesh or a grate with holes in it). Walk around your house and inspect it for any opening large enough for a raccoon to fit through (if a cat could fit through it, a raccoon probably could, too). Always keep windows and garage doors closed at night.

**Remove bridges:** If you have tall trees or poles near your home, raccoons can climb them and use them as a bridge to get onto your roof and potentially into your home. Keep the branches of tall trees trimmed back so they don't hang over the roof. There should be no pathway from the ground to your roof.

## Signs you have a raccoon problem

Raccoons are nocturnal animals, so they're only active at night. Unless you're a night owl yourself, you may never actually see them on your property. But in the light of day, these common signs of raccoons can tip you off that you're housing some scavengers.

- **Evidence of feeding:** Garbage cans knocked over and/or trash thrown all over the place, broken or knocked down bird feeder, unexplained holes in the lawn and garden (from digging for grubs), fish missing from pond
- **Raccoon tracks:** 2-3 inches wide, shaped like a hand with five toes on each paw, may be able to see little claws on the tips of each toe
- **Raccoon droppings:** Usually cylinder-shaped and no more than 3 inches long, vary in color and consistency
- **Loud noises from outside:** At night, may hear them rummaging, growling, or running across the roof
- **Scratch marks:** May leave small scratch marks on trees, wood piles, and any other structure they could climb