



Keeping Unwanted Animals Out of Your Yard: **Opossum**

Contrary to popular belief, the Opossum is not a large rodent; it is in fact a marsupial closely related to the Kangaroo. These misunderstood and underappreciated animals are a wonderful addition to any ones garden doing virtually no damage. Although these creatures may look ferocious, they are incredibly shy and gentle. They provide a great service throughout our neighborhood cleaning up carrion, rodents, rotting fruit and vegetables, snails, slugs, cockroaches and a variety of other unwanted garden pests. They do not dig but prefer to be under cover during the day. They do not attack people and will always run away given the chance. They do not eat fruit still growing on trees (that is done by rats) but prefer the over ripe fruit found on the ground.

1. **Eliminate the Food Source.** Opossums are attracted to urban areas by the easy accessibility of food, water, and shelter. Reducing or eliminating the availability of all of these factors will keep opossums from moving in or encourage them to leave. Tight fitting lids should be kept on garbage cans; pets should be fed during daylight hours and any leftovers removed immediately, water bowls should be emptied or taken in at night; gardens should be frequently harvested and windfall fruit picked up. Food should never be intentionally left out for wild mammals.
2. **Housing.** Opossums can be excluded from buildings by covering foundation vents with slotted metal vent covers and by using 1/4 inch grid screening to cover attic vents and chimneys. Opossums have been known to enter homes through pet doors. Keep pet doors locked at night. Opossums sometimes take up residence under low decks. They may be excluded by using 1/4 inch grid screening or solid metal flashing. Trench around the perimeter of the deck a minimum of 12 inches deep, insert screening in trench and backfill. Attach top of screening to facade of deck with nails or fence post staples. Before completing final seal on the last entry point, it is wise to make sure no animals are trapped inside. On the night before completing repairs, sprinkle flour in the entrance hole and check for tracks the following morning. If no tracks are evident for 3 consecutive nights, no animals are likely to be present. You may wish to make a temporary one-way exit using 1/4 inch screening. Form the screening into a cone or funnel shape. The large end should be sized to encircle the entry hole and be attached to the facade of the deck or building with nails or fence post staples. The small end should face away from the house and be 4 inches in diameter.
3. Opossums can be kept away from roof areas by trimming tree branches 10 feet from roof and by keeping climbing plants trimmed away from eave areas.