



## Keeping Unwanted Animals Out of Your Yard: **Raccoons**

Raccoons generally feed at night, often times looking for discarded fruit and vegetables; they'll eat just about anything, really. The key to keeping raccoons at bay is to make your home a less inviting place to eat. Regardless of how much you do to prevent raccoons from partying in your yard at night, live traps and relocation is really the only way to keep raccoons away. Sure, repellents and fences will do the trick, but they're temporary solutions because raccoons are very smart little critters. They can still climb fences, and they will constantly test your defenses. Here are some tips:

1. **Sealed or sheltered trash bins will discourage raccoons.** Obviously, raccoons are digging through your trash to find a meal. Make sure you either keep your trash cans sealed, bound shut with cord, or put the trash in a small shelter, like a storage shed. Use metal trash cans, always use the lid and weight the lid with something heavy, like a brick. When throwing away choice foods, like meat, double bag it, to reduce the scent that leaks from your trash. Add a splash of ammonia to your trash cans too. Raccoons are clever and agile, they can open trash cans and other containers..
2. **Live "Havahart" traps** will help you get rid of raccoons. Far and away the best method of removing the nuisance of raccoons is to trap them live and bring them to a wooded area far away from your own home. Be careful though, raccoons will bite if they feel threatened. Wear thick gloves when handling the traps.
3. **Fenced gardens** will dissuade raccoons from feasting. Raccoons don't always look in the garbage to satisfy their hunger. Certain things in the garden, like small fruit will definitely suffice. If you have fruit or berries growing in your yard, regularly clean up fallen fruit. It will hard to keep raccoons out of trees, but no sense in leaving a buffet for them on the ground. If you can build a sturdy fence (electrified if possible) around your garden, you should see less raccoons hovering around your yard.
4. **Motion-sensing lights and sound devices will keep raccoons away.** The reason raccoons are nocturnal is because they're less vulnerable at night. Motion-sense lights and sound devices should scare the raccoons away, but don't depend on these devices for too long; eventually raccoons will learn they aren't really threatened.
5. **Commercial repellents will stop raccoons.** There are several online vendors of repellents, who claim that spraying their product on garbage cans and around yards will deter raccoons. Wolf urine is common, and has been recommended by wildlife specialists for quite some time.
6. **The sound of a human voice** is known to drive away raccoons. Place a radio, set to a talk radio station, in the vicinity of their nest. It doesn't have to be loud, start with a low volume level. If it doesn't get results, try increasing the volume. Leave the radio on day and night.

7. **Raccoons prefer dark places** for their nests. If you can light up your attic or crawlspace, this will disturb the raccoons, possibly enough to make them move out.
8. **Raccoons are clean** animals, in fact they often wash their food before eating. Because of this habit of cleanliness, they do not foul their nests. Ammonia, a chemical found in urine, is an offensive odor for raccoons. Soak rags in ammonia and place them as near to their nest as safely possible. You may also want to place soaked rags near all possible entrances. If you have difficulty reaching the nest, you might be able to apply ammonia in the vicinity with a squirt bottle. Periodically retreat the area with ammonia.
9. **Keeping the Raccoons Out After They Have Gone.** Once the raccoons are out, you must seal their access to your home. If you aren't certain if they are out, seal all but one exit. Once you think they are out, seal the last exit. You don't want to trap them in your home, they will die of thirst, decay and emit a foul odor for days or even weeks. Furthermore, the mother may leave the nest, to return later, but the litter of baby raccoons remains behind. Sealing out the mother is both inhumane, and will result in a foul odor if the babies die in your home. Adult raccoons can fit through an opening about 3 or 4 inches in diameter. Inspect under your eaves, especially where valleys occur. Raccoons are strong and have dexterous fingers. They can tear off siding and screens. Repair holes and openings with heavy wire cloth, steel flashing or solid wood. Secure with several screws or nails to a solid structure.