

■ CAT PROBLEM: Township bylaw no help to resident

# Gardener has few options for persistent pests

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COLBORNE — The 10 varieties of heirloom tomatoes Craig Smith is nurturing include amazing colours, and even one kind that lets you break off discrete pieces (like a garlic clove).

The carrots are in 12 rainbow varieties that he plans to group into multi-coloured bunches.

The pumpkins will delight his two boys as the vegetables reach maturity in the autumn weeks ahead.

The relatively small garden Smith tends to lovingly in his back yard also promises broccoli, lettuce, spinach, snow peas, and many different colours and varieties of peppers and beans.

It's easy to see how passionate the Colborne resident is about farming and gardening.

But among the most persistent pests he defends it from are two feral cats, and his options for dealing with them are few.

Smith moved into the Colborne apartment in the late spring, and found his new home haunted by the previous tenant's abandoned cats. He knows that's where they came from, because the landlord's daughter knew the previous tenants and their cats.

He has learned that one is the mother of the other, leading him to wonder if it had been vaccinated. Rabies tend to spread quickly, he noted.

There's also the issue of fleas and other parasites. He hates to think of his two sons seeing the cats and wanting to pet them.

"That's not good. That's why I don't think feral animals are good in general," he said.

Aside from the health issues, there's the nuisance factor — the fresh-dug holes in his garden, the cat footprints on his new car, the noise, even the odd appearance at his back door (on one memorable occasion, hanging off the screen and leaving a rip).

He also worries about the friendly chipmunks in his yard, who would be easy prey for a wily cat.

