

Town Gardeners

Garden pests hardy souls

By TOM CAVAN

Cavan's Garden Centre

Every spring I field questions on how to control rodents in the garden. The usual statements like "My lawn looks like the Paris railway map" or "Is there anything I can do for my fruit tree, it has been girdled by mice? come in the door as steady as the cluster fly in fall. The hardest part about helping these poor souls is that prevention takes place in the fall not spring.

There are many ways you can clean your garden of these pests but you will never eradicate them permanently. Mice, rats, moles, voles, rabbits and deer can be controlled but you never give up the battle to be successful at overwintering your garden. It is really discouraging to plant a specimen only to wake up in spring and discover that you served a delicacy to some little vermin.

SANITATION

Sanitation is the first place you must concentrate your efforts in order to root their nesting areas. With mulches you pull the material away from the stem and paint the bark with rodent repellent. Obvious nesting areas like the compost must be over turned regularly and keep the grass cut down near these areas. Keep all pet foods and livestock feed in metal containers. Piles of prunings can also provide nesting areas for rodents so clean and rotate these so you don't become the hot spot for your local garden variety pests. Rake leaves and burn them (with a permit) then spread the ashes around plants you wish to protect. They don't like fire or the smell of it.

My grandfather told me farmers used to catch them and torch them on a stick and prop them up to ward

of any rodent relatives seeking out refuge in their barns. I guess back in those days one became resourceful in order to survive.

TRAPS AND POISONS

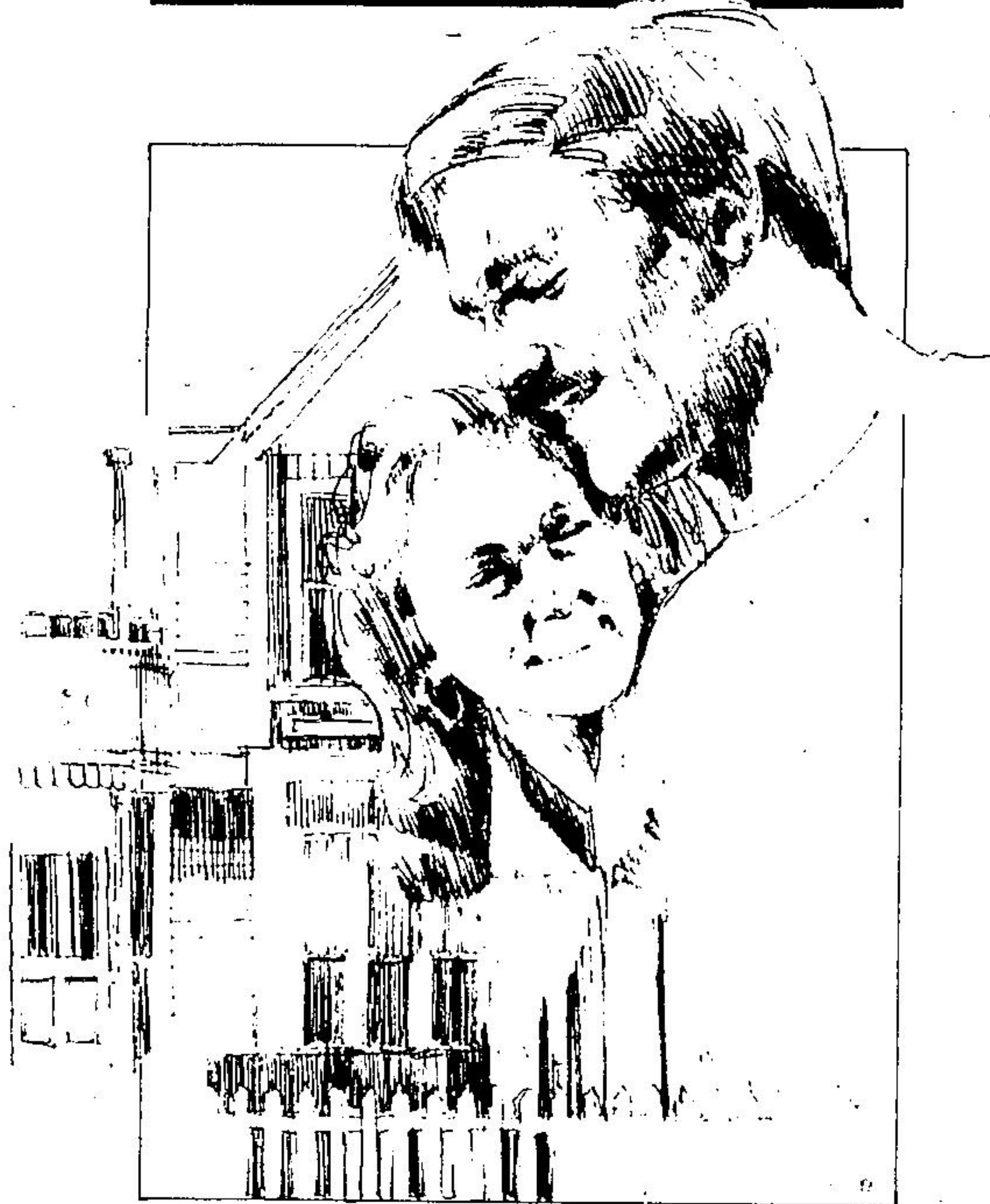
By disturbing the nesting areas or runs they travel they will become disoriented and be more likely to take poison bait. Pre-baiting is a good way of luring them to eating the poison bait. I have tried this method with traps to rid my kitchen of a tough mouse. we nick-named Maytag, since it was identified sneaking around the dishwasher. The little mouse wouldn't touch the trap so placed cream cheese on a cracker to fatten him up, then one day I replaced the ritz with a typical mouse trap and Maytag was history.

Alternatives to poisons are deterrents like Scoot which is a paint you put on the bard. When a mouse or rabbit take a bit they dislike the taste and move on to neighbors house for their mid-winter snack. Scoot can also be applied by spraying it on the foliage of yews, a favorite of deer. Tree collars and wraps will physically keep them out providing the snow line doesn't exceed the area your protecting.

Bloodmeal is an organic source of nitrogen that has repeatedly proven itself effective at repelling rodents because it has the scent of death and they will back down no matter what. There is one downfall to bloodmeal, you must apply it regularly to be effective. Organic controls tend to work that way thus the reason why their aren't harmful to the environment they dissipate easily. Otherwise try a cat. I did.

If you have any gardening questions, call 519-833-2117 or write c/o Town Garden, R.R. 2, Erin, Ont. NOB 1T0.

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Entertainment area



AN ENTERTAINMENT AREA with a Jenn-Air single gas grill-range cooktop, bar-sink and Jenn-Air Wine Cellar is created outside the cook's work area. It is strategically located to be convenient to an outside deck and the dining room and yet can serve as a second cook's workstation.