

Cottontail Rabbits

Cottontail rabbits belong to the order lagomorph. There are twelve species of cottontails in the United States, with the Eastern Cottontail being the most common.

Cottontails like to live in brushy areas, like fields bordering woodlands, brush piles, and thickets. They survive well in the suburbs and get all they need for food, water, and shelter there. Cottontails are most active at dawn and dusk and forage for food into the early nighttime hours. In the spring and summer they eat grasses and leafy plants and in the fall and winter they primarily eat buds, twigs, bark, and young trees.

Eastern Cottontails are sexually mature at about two months of age and breed from April to September. They usually have three to four litters of about five kittens. Nests typically are made in small depressions in the ground and are lined with grass and fur from the mother.

POSSIBLE CONFLICTS & SOLUTIONS

Damage to gardens and ornamental shrubbery is the most common conflict between humans and rabbits. Browsing on plants in yards, these animals thrive in the suburbs.

Rabbit damage to plants is identified by the neat-clipped appearance of browsed vegetation, as well as obvious animal tracks and scat in the form of small piles of pea sized pellets (deer droppings look similar but are larger in size).

Below is a list of plants that seem to be distasteful to cottontail rabbits. Instead of attracting rabbits, you'll be providing food for butterflies because these plants produce nectar that is irresistible to butterflies.

Agastache	Rock Rose (pavonia)
Blackfoot Daisy (melampodium)	Rosemary
Butterfly Bush (buddleia)	Russian Sage (perovskia)
Butterfly Weed (asclepias)	Salvia
Columbine (aquilegia)	Santolina
Firewheel (gaillardia)	Sedum
Four Nerve Daisy (tetraeneuris)	Texas Betony (stachys)
Foxglove (digitalis)	Thrift
Gregg's Mist Flower (eupatorium)	Turk's Cap (malvaviscus)
Lavender	Yarrow (achillea)
Ox Eye Daisy (chrysanthemum)	

The most effective way to keep rabbits out of a flower or vegetable garden is to erect a fence around the garden 2-3 feet high. This is best done using chicken wire or hardware cloth (a heavy gauge woven wire mesh fencing material) staked about every 4 feet and buried into the ground at least 8 inches (preferably 12 inches) with a bend at the bottom to prevent animals from burrowing underneath.

Commercial repellents with the active ingredients ziram, thiram, capsaicin, or dentonium saccharide may work to repel rabbits in the yard or garden (read labels before using these products on plants that will be eaten). Homemade repellents can also be effective. Made by boiling onions and hot peppers, letting mixture steep, then straining off the vegetables and pouring the liquid into a spray bottle this mixture can be applied to flower bulbs and plants (see recipe below). Remember that repellents need to be reapplied regularly in order to be effective and always follow the directions on any commercial product purchased.

Hot Pepper Repellent:

- 1 chopped yellow onion
- 1 chopped jalapeno pepper
- 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper

Boil ingredients for 20 minutes in 2 quarts of water. Let it cool and strain through cheesecloth. Apply with spray bottle. Will deter any animal where applied and lasts 3-5 days, need to re-apply after rain.

This recipe is courtesy www.UrbanWildlifeRescue.org. If using this mixture with a vegetable garden make sure to wash vegetables well before eating them.

<http://www.livingwithwildlife.org/wildlifehelp/animals/rabbit.html>