

Why wildlife, cold air won't do you any favors

Those birds and furry creatures aren't there to make your vegetable plants more productive

By Wendy Hanson Mazet ■ Extension Educator

TAKING PRECAUTIONS: Take these easy steps to save your hard-earned garden from various critters and cruel weather

With our short growing season, wildly fluctuating Spring temperatures and our local wildlife extending unwanted gardening assistance, growing produce in northern Nevada is a challenge. But before you throw your hands in the air and return to purchasing vegetables at the local grocery store, consider this: the extra effort you put into protecting your little seedlings from wind, snow and feathered and furry friends will pay off with bountiful harvests at the end of the season.

When creating your garden protection plan, first determine which threats you will be protecting your garden against. Gardeners living in town are most likely to have problems with quail, rats, raccoons, ground squirrels,



A rodent-deterrent fence improves your chances of a good harvest.

moles and voles. People living on larger parcels near open space or sources of water often have many other pests to add to the list, including cottontails and jackrabbits, chipmunks, skunks, deer, bears and others. Each critter is unique in its habits and the destruction it can cause.

Once you've identified your

pests, it's time for defense.

Liquid repellents work for short periods of time, but can become time-consuming and costly; habitat modification and exclusion are the most effective defenses. A fence with chicken wire or hardware cloth can deter many rodents. Small, portable chicken wire

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About this series

This article is the ninth in a University of Nevada Cooperative Extension series on starting your own vegetable garden. Articles explore such topics as site selection, ordering seeds and preparing your soil. To find the complete series of articles, go to our ["Grow Your Own" page at www.unce.unr.edu](http://www.unce.unr.edu)



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Protect your plants from the cold, wind

cages protect seeds and new seedlings from quail and other feathered friends. Once crops grow 6-12 inches, birds tend to leave them alone and the cages can be moved to protect other crops.

For critter control information, contact:

-University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, 784-4848

-The Nevada Department of Agriculture, 688-1180

-The Nevada Department of Wildlife, 688-1500.

Your garden needs protection from not only birds and beasts, but also from Nevada's harsh, dry winds and freezing temperatures. Cool-season crops can handle a dusting of snow, but if you want to get a head start on warm-season crops, there are many products and common household items that can be used if a storm comes through.

One common plant protector is a cold frame. Cold frames can easily be made out of four straw bales with a window placed on top creating a miniature greenhouse. You



A hoop house keeps the cold off of your garden.

can purchase structures from local nurseries or garden catalogues. Plants in containers can be moved into cold frames and crops can be planted directly into a cold frame setup. When winter storms are predicted, gardeners can also cover sensitive crops with floating row covers or use household sheets or light blankets. These covers will provide a few degrees of frost protection by insulating and trapping the warmth from the ground. Floating row cover products can also be used to make mini hoop houses which

can be left on to protect crops such as lettuce from insects. Wall-O-Water type products – cylindrical plastic tubes which, when filled with water, create miniature greenhouses – can also be helpful early in the season to protect crops such as peppers, eggplants, tomatoes and melons, but they need to be removed once temperatures heat up.

For more tips on keeping your vegetable garden rodent-free and protecting your crops from killing frosts, contact your local University of Nevada Cooperative Extension office.



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Grow a Row

As you dig your garden this spring, plan ahead to share your bounty with those less fortunate.

Plant an extra row or two to donate to elderly neighbors or families in need.

Many churches will take produce to their needy parishioners. Schools know who at their school is having a rough time getting by. Maybe your vegetables or fruit donation can provide food for a family on the edge.

There is an international movement to "Grow a Row." "America Grow a Row" is a nonprofit organization that brings food to the hungry. They go to farmers and help with gleaning – gathering up the left over vegetables after

the farmer has harvested. They adopt gardens to help people who can't keep up with their plots and give the produce back. They pick up extra or unsellable produce at local grocery stores to deliver to food pantries.