

Rodents

While all rodents can cause damage to your home and property, rats have the worst reputation.

While cute to look at, chipmunks and squirrels are usually the ones responsible for chewing through the tops and often the bottoms of trash containers allowing easy access to the trash stored inside. Please note that, in general, if you rinse and empty your recyclables, your recycling carts will be left alone.

Timely tips to keep rodents out of your trash

- Try to minimize the amount of food going into your trash but placing *fresh* fruit and vegetable scraps in with yard waste during yard waste season. DPW has a container with an attached lid and locking mechanism available to store these during the week (\$15).
- If you *are* throwing food away, be sure it is in a tight sealed container (a glass or plastic container with a tight top helps). You can also empty food into plastic bags and if you have space in your freezer, try freezing your scraps until Monday night or early Tuesday morning before adding them to your trash. Until defrosted, there will not be an odor to attract animals including dogs and cats.
- Be sure you have a tight lid on the top of your trash container. Even though rodents will chew through the plastic tops, a secure top is a deterrent and helps minimize odors which attract these pests.

Timely tips to deter rodents from making your home their home:

- While squirrels like to use trees, both chipmunks and rats burrow into the ground. They make their homes where there is brush, vegetation, a wood pile or a deck to hide the entrances to their burrows. Limiting or removing these hiding places will make your home less attractive to these ground burrowing rodents.
- Remove all brush or vegetation, and stack all wood on a rack that is at least 18 inches off the ground.

ALL RODENTS WILL FIND FOOD THEY LIKE AROUND YOUR HOME

Limiting sources of food:

- Every animal needs to eat. *Urban Rats*, in particular, have a list of favorite foods including dog and cat feces, garbage, bird seed and food items improperly added to compost sites. Because rats do not like to travel more than 50 feet for their food, there must be an ample supply somewhere near their burrows.
- Chipmunks and squirrels also have a diet primarily consisting of seeds, nuts and other fruits and buds but chipmunks will also eat insects, fungi, small frogs, worms and bird eggs. Around humans, chipmunks and squirrels will eat cultivated grains and vegetables and other plants from farms and gardens.
- If you have a dog, remove all dog feces from the yard, do not leave food or water bowls outside and be vigilant in cleaning up after your dog.
- Keep lids tightly secure on garbage cans.
- If you are feeding the birds, be sure to keep the area clear of excess bird seed or other food (nuts, fruit scraps). It is better not to ground feed any birds since rodents are primarily ground feeders as well. Be sure to sweep up and dispose of any excess seed that has fallen to the ground as this becomes a food source for rodents. *Some experts suggest that you not feed birds, squirrels and other wild animals during the late spring, summer and early fall months since they can easily find natural and healthier foods at*

those time of year.

- If you **compost**, do not leave fruit and vegetable scraps on the top of your compost pile. For information on home composting check the section on Composting and Healthy Lawn & Garden tips on the DPW: *Because You Asked* page. You can also access the SOCWA web site for additional information on both composting and healthy lawns and gardens.

If you and your neighbors want to get rid of rats or chipmunks permanently, we recommend that you hire a professional to trap or poison them before you eliminate their shelter or source of food. Open poisons are illegal. Remember that birds, squirrels and especially cats are attracted to rat poisons. They have been known to go into the entrances of burrows and pull the poison out to eat it. It's a good idea to keep cats indoors during the extermination period.

After exterminating these pests, be sure to remove all brush or vegetation, and stack all wood on a rack that is at least 18 inches off the ground. Be sure to eliminate their food sources, as well. If you have a dog, remove all dog feces from the yard and continue to do so, do not leave food or water bowls outside and be vigilant in cleaning up after your dog wherever you go. And lastly, always keep lids tightly secure on garbage cans and any food stored outside or in your garage and sweep up any excess bird seed which falls to the ground.