

Snake Talk

by Stanley Rachesky
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The fall of the year has arrived. Usually in the spring and fall of the year snakes can become an annoyance. They're often found sunning themselves on the patio or porch steps. Many a housewife has run into the house screaming after coming upon one while hanging up her wash on the backyard clothesline.

In Illinois we have three different kinds of poisonous snakes. The water-moccasin is only found in the very southern tip of the State. Copperheads and rattlers are widely scattered around the State. The farther north your travel, the less you will find. Chicagoland residents live too far north to find a Copperhead. The only rattler found in the Northeastern area of Illinois is the Massasaugas swamp rattler and this snake is found near rivers and other bodies of water. Coming upon a poisonous snake while tramping through the woods is about as likely as a trip to the moon.

All of the snakes mentioned are pit vipers and can be identified by the slit pupils of their eyes and pits between the eyes and nostrils. Non-poisonous snakes have round eye pupils and no pit between the eyes and nostrils. There are over two dozen different kinds of non-poisonous snakes in Illinois. The garter snake will be the most prevalent found.

Identify the snake by looking him straight in the eye and remember this:

- If the pupil is slit — don't get bit
- If the pupil is round — no harm to a hound

Snake problems in residential areas are becoming more frequent since the move to the suburbs. The chance of being bitten by a snake is almost nonexistent. Bites reported from poisonous snakes are rare. In fact, more people die from bee and wasp stings than from snake bites each year.

Total eradication of snakes is almost impossible. They will continue to move onto your property from surrounding areas. To help keep your snake population down, remove areas of tall grass, weeds, etc. Removing their cover will discourage them from remaining around your area.

Sometimes a high snake population is an indication that rodent population is high. Control your rat or mouse problem and the snake problem will decrease. No chemicals for use by golf course personnel are recommended for snake control. In most situations a shovel or club is sufficient to eliminate an occasional snake.

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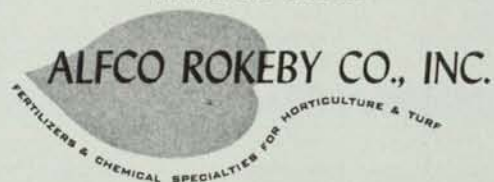
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