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COMBATING ANIMAL PESTS — Each year we have many requests for information concerning the different animals that are causing damage to ornamental plantings. For instance, mice like to congregate in mulched shrub beds, gnawing bark and girdling shrubs during the winter months. They also like to dig into shrub plantings. The burrowing pine mouse chews roots of perennials and ornamental woody plantings, particularly flowering crabapple, flowering peach and ornamental plum trees. Control: While trapping with snapback traps may be practical in limited areas, the use of poisoned grains is more effective. For safety, half bury horizontally lengths of drainpipe, and place tablespoon amounts of poisoned wheat or oats in the tiles from time to time. Specially formulated rodent killers, which are safe for use around pets, are also available.

Chipmunks, gophers and ground squirrels burrow in lawn borders and shrub beds. These rodents dig up and gnaw bulbs and tuberous roots as well as seeds. Control: Use wire mesh live traps, poisoned peanuts or gas. If you are interested in further information, request one of the bulletins offered at the end of this letter.

Woodchucks feed on succulent growth of bulb plantings, tender annuals and perennials. They burrow on meadow and woodland hillsides creating a hazard for mowers, pedestrian traffic and horseback riders. Trapping may be effective, especially large steel mesh traps baited with pieces of fresh vegetables.

Rabbits gnaw on bark of ornamental woody plants during the winter such as crabapple, deciduous plants, azaleas, cotoneasters and many other trees and shrubs. In the spring they chew the shoots of newly emerged spring bulbs and during the summer they gnaw both annual and perennial ornamentals. Enclose young trees and deciduous shrub trunks in one-half inch hardware cloth mesh with at least a two-inch clearance all around. Shrubs and areas where damage has occurred may also be surrounded by using the hardware cloth. Use a rodent repellent such as thiram, which is also a fungicide, spraying once or twice beginning in late autumn. Bloodmeal material may be used in shrub planting areas; however, rats and dogs may be attracted by this material.

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