



Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc.

Priscilla Hutt Williams

35 Turner Road, Townsend, Massachusetts 01469

(TEL) 978-597-3005 (FAX) 772-264-7886

phw@seedlingspecialist.com

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Dear Doris,

Summertime! Time to sit back and enjoy all the beautiful flowers in your garden. Just remember to water!! Why not squirt your spouse, the kids or the dog at the same time. If you didn't get a copy of our summer watering tips, click [here](#)! Most of all, enjoy your summer.

Nuisance Wildlife in the Garden

This spring, for the first time ever, something came to eat flowers in my holding area! We suspected deer, as the first incident was in early spring with snow still melting in some areas of the yard. New acquisitions were covered with floating row covers or placed on tables and the trouble stopped. Then it began again in mid-June, and I happened upon the culprit one cloudy night around 6 pm - a young woodchuck scuttled across the drive ahead of my arriving van and dove beneath my garden shed!



Woodchuck looking for a home



Do you see any of these
in your yard?

This scenario is becoming more common as suburban sprawl continues in our region. Human developments are encroaching more often on wildlife habitat. It's wonderful to see owls, birds, butterflies, turtles, and even a deer from time to time. But it's frustrating to lose plants to marauders. Can we live with some light damage or is there a point where we can no longer tolerate it? Good questions! Naturally, in an organic program, we wish to minimize harm to animals, our fellow inhabitants here on Planet Earth. So what to do?

First of all, properly identify the animal causing the problem. Signs such as droppings, digging or chewing damage can be observed if you look closely. Rabbit droppings are pea size and brown while deer droppings are oval shaped and could be deposited loosely or in a large clump.

Digging can be another noticeable sign of animal damage.

Click [here](#) for our
how-to chart
if you are bothered by
nuisance wildlife.

Examine the diameter of the hole to gain clues about the size of the animal. If a dirt mound is present, this could be a sign of a woodchuck or coyote. Snapping turtles may dig several false nests before settling into egg laying mode. You may see shallow depressions in the soil. They generally do not dig in areas with many plants. Turtles mostly nest in sunny areas with bare soil and scant vegetation. If a dirt mound is not present, this could indicate a chipmunk, skunk, mole or vole.

Tunnels in the dirt near the surface most often come from a mole or vole. Remember, moles eat insects, earthworms or grubs while voles are herbivorous preferring bulbs, roots, tubers or bark.

Finally, chewing damage can be a telling animal sign. Since deer do not possess upper incisors, deer have to pull at leaves and therefore can leave a rough and ragged edge, whereas rabbits and woodchucks will make a cleaner cut.

Pumpkin Brook can help apply repellents to discourage many nuisance animals, or refer you to [wildlife control services](#) that handle trapping. It is also important to plant species that are avoided by deer and rabbits, and native plants are perfect for this role. Julie shared a tip to deter deer and rabbit browsing. She suggests saving your rose prunings. Take 3-5 canes and construct a teepee around the plant.

Contact [Priscilla](#) to discuss what may help in your garden.

Summer Microbial Foods: What Are They?

Many of you are on our [plant health care and compost tea program](#) and have seen Carmine out and about drenching the soil with liquid containing microbial foods. Some of you have asked us to explain more about what he is doing and the science behind it, so we decided to interview him to learn more.

What are microbial foods? Carmine:

In short, they are foods for micro-organisms in the soil. The micro-organisms we are feeding may have been pre-existing in the soil or could have been recently introduced into the soil food web via a compost tea application. The liquid mixture contains direct and secondary food sources for different types of micro-organisms including fungi, bacteria, protozoa, and nematodes. When these micro-organisms are present in the soil in the proper ratios it



Well cared for roses



When your plants look this good,
you must be a
PBOG Compost Tea customer.

helps release nutrients to the plant at a rate the plant requires. A soil teeming with a diversity of micro-organisms is also more disease and pest resistant and can help hold moisture and nutrients in the soil.

What goes into the mixture?

Carmine:

There are four components to the mixture and each component benefits different micro-organisms. 1. Fish fertilizer and fish hydrolysates (for fungi) 2. Unsulfured molasses (for bacteria) 3. Powdered kelp (for both fungi and bacteria) 4. Micronized humic acid (acts as a soil amendment to help hold nutrients and also feeds fungi). An active population of fungi and bacteria supports organisms further up the food chain that feed on these micro-organisms such as protozoa and nematodes.



Carmine Sprays Summer
Microbial Foods

Why is it important to feed these micro-organisms?

Carmine:

It's important because it helps encourage nutrient cycling. In other words when micro-organisms feed they excrete nutrients into the soil in a plant available form. Unlike synthetic fertilizers these nutrients are in a form that the plant can readily use.

Why do you apply it at this time of year?

Carmine:

I apply it mainly in June and July because the micro-organisms are in a stage of low reproduction, feeding, and thus nutrient cycling during this time. They will become active again in the fall as plants are simultaneously putting out flushes of new growth. We want to stockpile food sources during this time so that food reserves will be available come late summer/early fall.

How do you know if you are getting results in the soil?

Carmine:

We test the soil to monitor both the nutrient balance as well as the soil microbiology.

Will I see a difference in my plants?

Carmine:

While the major reason for summer foods is to prime the soil and soil organisms for the second growing season from mid-August through mid-September, as a bonus, you may see your plants perform better during heat and drought stress periods.

If you aren't already on our [plant health care](#) program, please e-mail [Carmine](#) today.

Pest Alert: Black Vine Weevil, *Otiorhynchus sulcatus*

If you have ever noticed crescent shaped chewing damage like this on your broad leaved evergreens, especially rhododendrons, you probably have black vine weevil. The adult pest chews on the leaf margins (leaf perimeter) while the larval grub feeds on the roots and can eventually girdle the main stem. Some of their favorite plants include rhododendrons, yews, hemlocks,

andromedas, mountain laurels and Japanese hollies.

Adults are 3/8" long with a brown black color and jointed antennae. Black vine weevil eggs are laid in the soil or mulch at the base of the plant and one adult can lay as many as 200 eggs. The eggs hatch in two to three weeks to emerge into cream colored, c-shaped larvae that feed on plant roots.



Black Vine Weevil Damage



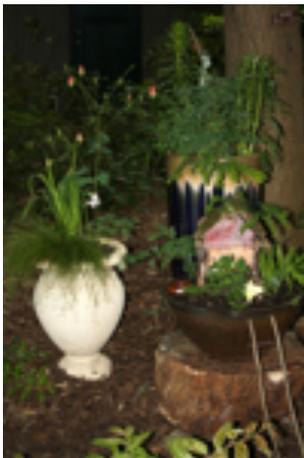
Black Vine Weevil

From late May through July the adult female weevils emerge and must feed on leafy plant material for 21 to 45 days before egg laying begins. It is during this emergence period that treatment with organic insecticides, such as neem, are most effective.

Nocturnal by nature, black vine weevils will hide in the mulch or leaf litter during the day and feed at night. Reducing soil moisture and removing excess mulch can help create less than ideal habitat conditions. Planting resistant varieties can also be an effective way to manage this pest pre-emptively. Rhododendron varieties with curled or furry leaves have been shown to demonstrate resistance. Applications of compost tea can also encourage active microbial life that will become natural predators of these pests.

Lisa's a Whiz at Containers!

Congratulations to our own Lisa Mattei, who won first place in the Professional Category at New England Wild Flower Society's first annual container gardening contest in late June! The challenge was to use native plants that attract pollinators in a creative way for summer containers.



Lisa's 1st Place Exhibit



Prize Winning Fairy House Container

Lisa and her teenage daughter, Alyssa, worked together on their theme, "Fairy Tales Do Come True." At the end of the "Native Buzz" exhibit on August 31, they will donate the plants to Alyssa's former Montessori school garden.

Click [here](#) for more information about the exhibit.

Pruning for Pest Control

Pruning can be one of the best ways to manage damaged shrubs and trees. We recently came across a Rhododendron that had been suffering from borer damage. The treatment plan was to cut away the damaged branches with tunneling borers to leave behind only unaffected branches. For a difficult to access pest like this, pruning can be the only option. If the pest is noticed soon





A hole is sure sign of a rhododendron borer

enough, the remaining plant structure will eventually fill in and the damage will be mitigated. For more pictures, please click [here](#).

If you suspect damage to your plants, e-mail Carmine who will come out and scout for pests.



Rhododendron Borer

July Is the Time for.....

- Getting out to enjoy other people's gardens for inspiration and fun. You may enjoy the upcoming Garden Conservancy tours. Click [here](#) for more information.
- Cutting back spent perennials to promote rebloom
- Deadheading and fish fertilizing annuals to promote continued bloom
- Pruning ornamental trees and shrubs
- Watering anything that is wilting in the heat, plus woody plants installed within the past three years
- Replanting vegetables such as beans and summer squash for a fall crop
- Weeding!
- Cutting back reblooming roses above a set of five outward facing leaves, as earlier blossoms fade
- Deadheading rhododendrons and mountain laurels
- Refreshing containers with new plants as needed - boost old potting soil with a handful of worm castings
- Making notes about perennials to divide or transplant in the early fall

Summer Watering Alert

Please click [here](#) for watering instructions in times of high temperature!

If you would like to supplement your garden with new plantings, [now](#) is the time to let me know. We will soon be scheduling our fall plantings.

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Sincerely,
Priscilla

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