

Department of Public Works
“Building Pride in Providence”

A Guide to Rodent Prevention in Community Gardens

Community gardens are an increasingly popular way to grow sustainable, local, fresh produce. Community gardens also provide a unique environment for people of all ages to participate in hands-on learning about growing food - an activity that has parallels in life lessons such as patience, responsibility and the rewards of hard work.

An important aspect of a safe garden is effective rodent control. Rodents can occasionally be an issue in community gardens. Rodents need three things to live: food, water and shelter. An improperly maintained garden provides all of these elements, making it an attractive environment for rodents to make home. Improperly constructed or maintained garden plots are the primary cause of rodents in community gardens.

In general, rodent problems can be minimized by:



- Properly maintaining compost
- Harvesting foods promptly
- Eliminating excess foliage that can provide harborage (a place for rodents to live)
- Choose your compost container wisely (The Earth Machine compost unit is very popular in gardens). Rodents are very good burrowers so they can easily get into unprotected compost piles. Your compost **MUST** be protected from rodents, meaning that no gap in your container should be any larger than a dime.

If you choose to build your own compost container, 1/4 inch steel hardware cloth is a durable and economical option to keep rodents out. Remember, it's much easier to prevent a problem than to deal with an existing infestation!

By following these guidelines, you can do your part to actively prevent a rodent problem in your community garden!

Acceptable and Non-Acceptable Items in your Community Garden Compost

 	<h1>OK</h1> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plant material free of disease or seeds• Coffee grounds• Plant stalks chopped into 1-2" pieces• Grass clippings• Clean cardboard• Clean newspaper	 
--	--	--

	<h1>NO</h1> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food scraps from home• Cooked foods, meats, dairy, eggs, or animal bones	
--	---	---

Why can't I compost food scraps in my community garden compost?

Due to the potential for rats in community gardens, plot holders are currently prohibited from composting anything that could become a food source for rodents.

Prevent Harborage

- Keep your garden plot free of excess foliage or undergrowth. Keep plants pruned. This will help to eliminate cover for rodents so that they will find your garden less appealing as a home. Reducing rat harborage is a great excuse to clean invasive plants out of your plot!
- Keep a close eye on your garden. Harvest ripe produce promptly. Don't let produce fall to the ground. This will help eliminate food sources for rodents.
- Turn and water compost piles regularly to promote active composting.