

Using Barriers and Scare Tactics to Avoid Pest Damage

by Rita Pelczar

IF YOU plant it, they will come. I'm talking about hungry garden pests that have a knack for devouring your tasty fruits and veggies just as they ripen—or reducing the leaves of your prized ornamental plants to something that resembles Swiss cheese. One of the best strategies I have found for avoiding pest damage is placing a physical barrier between pests and susceptible host plants. Another technique is to scare off or repel foragers before they do any damage. Here are several products that have worked well in my gardens.

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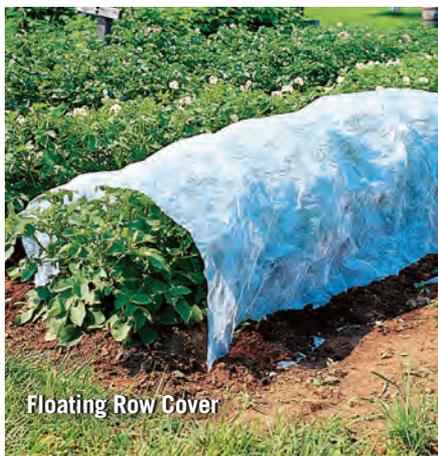
If deer, squirrels, or birds have browsed on the fruit of your blueberry bushes in the past, the **Storm Proof Crop Cage** from Gardener's Supply Company (www.gardeners.com) offers a good solution to saving your crop. The cage consists of a sturdy aluminum frame and polyethylene netting that is attached with clips. The large version is over eight feet long, almost five feet wide, and nearly six feet tall. Two doors, secured by heavy-duty zippers, provide access. It's lightweight and easy to move once your crop has been harvested and can be used to protect a wide variety of crops. There is also a medium-sized model that is about five-feet square and has one door.

The **Tall Pest Control Pop-Up**, also from Gardener's Supply Company, keeps both critters and bugs away from your strawberries, blueberries, and vegetables. Broccoli is a magnet for cabbageworms in my garden, but this steel-framed, nylon-mesh-covered cage prevents adult moths from laying their eggs on my plants, ensuring perfect broccoli heads. The spring-loaded cage, which pops open when you unpack it, comes in two sizes: four feet wide and deep, and about eight feet by four feet;





Easy Micromesh Tunnel



Floating Row Cover

both are four feet tall. Equipped with zippered and Velcro-secured openings and stakes for anchoring, the Pop-Ups fold flat for storage.

For shorter crops, the **Easy Micromesh Tunnel** from Gardener's Edge (www.gardenersedge.com) offers good protection from bunnies and bugs. It comes in two sizes: standard—18 inches wide and 12 inches high, and giant—23.6 inches wide and 18 inches tall. Both are nearly 10 feet long, so you can protect a good sowing of carrots, lettuce, spinach, radishes, or chard. The larger size also works well for cabbage, kale, and beans. The single-piece design features mesh with casings that house a series of steel hoops; slide the mesh up for easy harvesting. While the mesh provides some protection from wind and strong sun, air and water penetrate easily. The tunnel folds like an accordion for storage.

A **Floating Row Cover** is a lightweight spun-bonded fabric barrier that is laid over a frame or directly on top of a growing crop and secured at the lower edges with

soil, planks of wood, or pins. It's especially effective for deterring flying insects. Lee Valley's (www.leevalley.com) row cover is seven feet wide by 50 feet long. Other sizes are available from Gardener's Edge and Gardener's Supply Company. The material is easy to cut with scissors for shorter rows, but be sure to allow sufficient fabric to expand as the crop grows.

Slugs are among the most difficult pests to keep out of my gardens. **Corry's Slug & Snail Copper Tape Barrier** from Planet Natural (www.planetnatural.com) comes in a 15-foot roll that can be cut



to size with scissors and helps reduce the number of slugs that feed on your plants. While the sticky tape can be applied to a clean, dry surface, it is best to secure it along the top edge of raised beds with small tacks or staples.

SCARE TACTICS

I don't relish scaring birds or squirrels, but when they descend on my fruit trees

and blueberries, I get tough. **Scare Eye Bird Deterrents** from Lee Valley are a pretty humane option. These shiny egg-shaped plastic discs are about five inches long and feature the imprint of a colorful "eye" that mimics that of a predator, but I think it's more often the moving reflective surface that does the scaring. Each disc has a ring at the top for hanging it on a branch and a breeze-catching fin on the back side to keep it moving.



Scare Eye Bird Deterrent



Holographic Scare Tape

Similarly, **Holographic Scare Tape**, also from Lee Valley, is a lightweight, inch-wide metalized plastic film that displays a rainbow of colors when it catches the sun. Strips that flutter around my blueberries keep most birds away. Each roll is 100 feet long, and the film can be cut with scissors.

All of the above barriers and deterrents are effective in reducing pest damage without resorting to toxic chemicals. Be sure to have them in place before your pests arrive.

Rita Pelczar is a contributing editor for The American Gardener.