

# Stop birds from pecking your peaches

By RICK ROSEN  
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Those beautiful peaches on your tree are almost ripe. Tomorrow, you'll pick them. But when you go out with your peach basket, devastation awaits: Each golden-rose fruit has been devoured, leaving little but the pit.

We love homegrown peaches. Unfortunately, so do birds.

Because peaches don't ripen once picked, you must wait until they are ready before you pick them. That means birds might get there before you.

To learn ways to protect fruit such as peaches, pears and plums from being pecked, we talked to the experts: fruit farmers.

Two orchard owners recommended the same preventive: nets over the trees. Dale Ham, owner of Ham's Orchards in Terrell, said he had heard that nets kept the birds from getting at the fruit.

Heard? He didn't use nets?

Neither he nor Lafreita Hutton of Hutton Fruit Farm near Weatherford used nets, because the cost of covering an orchard to keep out birds would be prohibitive. "When you have an orchard, they are going to get their share," Ms. Hutton said.

But both thought nets would be fine for homeowners who have only a few trees.

Hutton Fruit Farm had tried devices

## CHORES



NATALIE CAUDILL/Staff Photographer

**Netting** may be the best way to keep birds from eating ripe peaches off trees.

that boom like cannons, Ms. Hutton said. Of course, the noise wouldn't go over well in the city. She also said that a scarecrow would be worth trying.

If you try a net, don't just drape it over the tree. Birds could fly under it to get at the fruit. Tie the net to the trunk so there is

no opening to exploit.

Not all nurseries carry nets. We found one at Calloway's on Greenville Avenue. The 14-by-14-foot net is \$9.99.

The master gardeners at the Texas Cooperative Extension Help Desk also said that nets seemed to be the top choice. They had other suggestions, as well. Noise, such as turning on a radio, seems to work, at least for a while, as do shiny objects that reflect light, scaring away the birds. Aluminum pie pans or Mylar reflective tape are worth trying. Some people put paper sacks over the fruit.

We found a company named Bird-X (www.Bird-x.com) that caters to farmers and others who need large-scale critter-repelling. It did have some products that homeowners might be able to adapt.

One was Critterblaster Pro, essentially a sound system with speakers that can be programmed. "Digital harassment sounds irritate animals and bird pests so they leave — for good!" says the site.

Our favorite was Terror-Eyes Bird Repeller. It's a 2-foot hanging ball with "menacing, moving eyes on front and back that strikes fear in birds!" It's \$45.

This year, I tied compact discs to my peach tree and to other nearby trees, in hopes reflected light would scare the birds. It has worked, so far. Of course, the birds are probably just waiting for the peaches to ripen.

## PASS IT ON

*Pass It On is a free service for readers who want to donate unwanted items. To submit, see Contact Us below. Offerings are accepted up to one week before publication. Requests for items are not accepted.*

## OFFERINGS

**Forty-six painted wood bookcases.** 6 inches to 9 inches deep, 48 inches to 78 inches tall. Take all. You haul. Heather, Richardson, 214-535-9908.

Sigrid Mureen

## HOME

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# Why won't flower bed thrive under shade tree?

**Is there a good shade tree beneath which I could grow a flower bed? We have a flower bed under a maple tree in our front yard, but nothing seems to grow well there. I've amended the soil, and I use seaweed fertilizer. Each season when I plant flowers, it's difficult to dig there because of the tree roots. Am I correct in assuming that the tree roots affect the success of the bedding plants? I would be willing to replace this tree if you can suggest another tree that has a deeper root system that won't interfere with the flowers.**

## ORGANIC ANSWERS



HOWARD GARRETT  
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orange oil. Add 2 ounces of orange oil or d-limonene per gallon of Garrett Juice.

Gro-Safe will tie up the contaminants in the soil, while Garrett Juice and orange oil stimulate beneficial soil microbes.

Also add dry molasses to the soil at a rate of 10 to 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet.

If you can't find Gro-Safe, use zeolite at a rate of 50 pounds per 1,000 square feet. (See Resources to obtain instructions.)

**Our apartment is infested with tiny red-and-black ants and mites. The landlord says he uses pesticides outdoors around the building, but he won't use anything inside. We have used sprays, which worked for a while, but the other apartments are not being exterminated, so the problem recurs.**

V.S., Pittsburg, Texas

Chemicals are more dangerous than insects and mites. I recommend not using chemicals, and that includes DEET.

Try spraying a solution containing orange oil and vanilla on your clothing and skin as a natural repellent: mix together 8 ounces of water, 2 teaspoons of vanilla extract and 1 teaspoon of orange oil.

Spray the apartment with a solution made with 1 ounce of orange oil per quart of water. If plants are to be sprayed, reduce the rate to 2 ounces of orange oil per gallon of water.

## RESOURCES

**ONLINE:** www.dirtdoctor.com for free organic-program handouts

**RADIO:** KSKY-AM (660), Saturday 11 a.m.-noon and Sunday 8-11 a.m. www.ksky.com.

**MAIL:** P.O. Box 140650, Dallas, TX 75214

**I want to paint the sides of my raised-bed garden. The material is untreated pine, but I want to paint it black. Could I use homemade milk paint or something containing linseed oil?**

C.B., Irving

I don't know of any nontoxic paints that would last in this kind of use. Painted or stained wood will rot pretty quickly, especially if you use organic gardening techniques.

When the garden walls need to be replaced, use stone, concrete or cinder block.

**Are railroad ties appropriate for building raised beds for a vegetable garden? A friend told me that they may release toxic chemicals into the soil.**

J.S., Dallas

Your friend is correct. If your soil has been contaminated by heavy metals such as arsenic and chromium in treated lumber or creosote in railroad ties, you should do several things.

First, remove the source of contamination.

Second, apply an activated charcoal product called Gro-Safe (it is made by Norit). Mix and apply it according to package directions.

Then, drench the contaminated area with a solution of Garrett Juice and

## THE WEEK

### SUNDAY GUIDELIVE

**A STUDY IN SUSHI:** Ever wonder about the origins of those raw tuna slices at the local Japanese restaurant? A new book explains how they got there.  
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### TUESDAY HEALTHY LIVING

**FIT IN THE CITY:** What we love about the Katy Trail

### WEDNESDAY TASTE

**FARM FRESH:** A guide to area farmer's markets

### NEXT WEEK HOME

**CONFEDERATE ROSES:** They're old-fashioned, unknown and coming back into favor.

## DigitalEXTRA

**Video:** Watch chef Mariano Fernandez prepare calamari with zucchini and squid ink from Cafe Madrid's updated tapas menu.

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Special Advertising Feature

# Shopping the Town

**Dishes' annual sale**

It's time for the Annual Sale at Dishes From The Past. Everything is 20-70% off for a short time only. Jennifer has been on the hunt and found fabulous circa 1825 flow mulberry (black) transferware. Shelley Dainty Blue, Noritake Marywood and Denby Seville are all on sale! Hurry in for best selection because the sale won't last long. Remember to call for reservations for the Table Setting Seminar on May 19 featuring award-winning designer Charlotte Comer. **Dishes from the Past**, 3701 Lovell in Fort Worth, 817-737-6390 or 1-800-984-8801. Open 10-5, Mon. to Sat.

**SampleHouse & CandleShop** is celebrating the grand opening of its newest location in Southlake at 1275 E. Southlake Blvd., 817-310-1078. Come by for a free hotdog from Thur., May 10 through Sat., May 12. Regular hours are 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Thursday - Saturday, and 1-5 p.m. on Sunday. Tyler jar candles are on sale. Reg. \$13.50 each. Sale price 3/\$33. Over 24 scents to choose from. Dallas, Highland Park, Plano, Frisco & Southlake.

**Mother's Day buffet**

Garden Tea Room is hosting a Mother's Day buffet from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday, May 13. The buffet features an omelet station, eggs benedict, scrambled eggs, breakfast potatoes, French toast, biscuits and gravy, pancakes, fruit tray, bacon, sausage and ham, fruit juice, coffee and tea. \$15.95 per person. For reservations, call 972-392-3911. Garden Tea Room is located in the back of **Forestwood Antique Mall**, 5333 Forest Lane and is open every Sunday at 11 a.m. for brunch.

**25% off Anniversary sale**

Enjoy the last full week of Rutherford's anniversary sale with 25% off everything through May 19. **Rutherford's**, 5417 W. Lovers Lane, 214-357-0888.

To advertise in Shopping the Town, contact your Dallas Morning News account representative or Denise Sanders at 214-977-2044.

## NORTH HAVEN Gardens

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