Cucumber Parisian Gherkin

Parisian Gherkin cucumber is an excellent mini or gherkin-pickling cucumber which can be picked either at the midget size or small pickle stage and processed. The crisp cucumbers have a sweet flavor and process into pickles well. The semi-vining plants can be planted in the garden or staked patio containers. This cucumber is very easy to grow and is a disease resistant variety that is well adapted to container gardens or raised beds.

Tomato Chef’s Choice Pink

Chef’s Choice Pink tomato plants have very large yields of 12-14 ounce pink beefsteak tomatoes. The prepect acid to sugar balance in this tomato make it a must for any home chef. Consider stewing or canning these beautiful tomatoes. The plants have indeterminate growth habit and good disease resistance.

Pepper Hot Sunset

For banana or wax pepper lovers who desire a prolific and earlier harvest of delicious and spicy fruits, Hot Sunset is for you. Large, healthy, vigorously growing plants disease-free and produce tasty and attractive fruits all season long. The AAS Trial judges noted what a great taste this thick-walled pepper has, not like other hot peppers where all you get is heat.

Pepper Sweet Sunset

Sweet Sunset is a compact banana pepper that is vigorous and sets a large amount of fruit. This high yielding variety produces attractive colorful tasty peppers that are great for fresh or canned. The compact upright plants do not require staking and can be grown in a container. This high-yielding plant produces early, often and late into the season. Source: All America Selections www.all-americanselections.org

Outwitting Wildlife at Bird Feeders – Part II

There are few things more frustrating to people who feed birds than pest antics taking advantage of the buffet we’ve set out. These unwanted guests can damage your feeders, eat and waste seed and could possibly even damage or invade your home. Last month, we gave some general recommendations on preventing nuisance wildlife at feeders. This article covers strategies to deter some of the pests commonly found at feeders in our area.

Nuisance Birds

European starlings, pigeons and house sparrows are considered pests at feeders. Grackles can also become pests, but they migrate so they won’t be a problem during winter. All of these birds can empty your feeders in a very short time. If you are having problems, use feeders that deter squirrels. These will also deter larger birds. You can also use feeders with small, unstable perches or require birds to cling or hang upside down.

House sparrows don’t like objects above their heads. The Magic Halo is a 30-inch wire hoop invented by UNL Professor, Dr. Ron Johnson, Emeritus. For more information on this device, see Extension publication, “Selective Bird Feeding: Deterting Nuisance Wildlife from Bird Feeders” (EC1783).

If you’re having problems with nuisance birds, try changing your feeder. Avoid mixes. Stick with hard-shelled seeds like sunflower and safflower. Never toss food out from feeders. Clean up waste seed on the ground by using trays suspended from feeders. Reduce the amount of seed reaching the feeder pole that is at least 3 feet from the feeder at night.

Dogs: Many wildlife will take advantage of bird feeders. Pictured is an opossum eating bird seed in a tray-like bird feeder. It is Important to Provide Water for Birds

Like all animals, birds need water to survive. Most birds drink water every day. In winter, you may see them gathering near puddles created by snowmelt. Birds also need to use water for bathing, cleaning feathers and removing parasites. A bird bath will even bring birds to your yard that don’t eat seeds and wouldn’t visit your feeders.

Bird baths can be purchased or made. During winter, use a heater especially designed for bird baths to keep the water from freezing.

Pease put up pet food! Many types of wildlife enjoy a meal of pet food left outside. I can’t tell you how many times people call the Extension office surprised to see raccoons, skunks and opossums enjoying food left out for the family dog or cat. Give your pet 10–30 minutes to eat and then pick up the dish of food. Be sure to pick up any food before sunset to deter nocturnal mammals. By deterring these wildlife visitors, you’ll also be protecting your pet from exposure to parasites and diseases carried by some wildlife.

Squirrels: These nimble animals will try all sorts of ways to get to the food you’ve placed out of their reach. Their antics are fun to watch until they cause damage to feeders, your seed budget and even your property if given a chance. Strategic placement of feeders, using squirrel baffles and squirrel-resistant feeders will help.

Raccoons: One of the simplest ways to stop raccoon raiding is to break their feeding cycle by removing seed for a week or so. You could start by removing seed before sunset in case the masked marauders only come at night, then put the feeders back in the day time. Otherwise, you can try to use a baffle on your feeders or hang your feeder from a thin wire. Raccoons have also been known to shake food out from feeders.

Voles, Opossums and Skunks: Reduct the amount of seed reaching the ground by using trays suspended from feeders. Clean up waste seed on the ground. Make sure you are storing your bird seed and suet securely. I store my birdseed outdoors in a metal trash can with a very secure, tight-fitting lid. When filling your bird feeders, be careful not to spill the seed next to your home so you don’t attract rodents.

Cats: Both domestic and feral cats will try to ambush birds at your feeders. Place your feeders away from shrubs and landscaping where they can hide. Feeders should be placed high off the ground. Keep cats indoors and work with wildlife officials and rescue groups to control feral cats.

Dogs: Dogs don’t usually prey on birds but they may chase them. Make sure you place any out of your dog’s reach.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Nebraska Extension publication “Selective Bird Feeding: Detering Nuisance Wildlife from Bird Feeders” (EC1783) available at the Extension office and online at http://lincs.unl.edu/our-birds/shtml

Buy a notebook and use it to keep all your gardening information. List what you plant in the garden. Include the name of seed companies, plant name, variety, planting date, and harvest date. During the growing season keep notes on how well the plants do. If the variety is susceptible to disease, record what was used to treat any problems. All this information will be helpful in planning future gardens.

Complete the pruning of shrubs, ornamental trees before growth starts, except for spring flowering shrubs. Prune those which bloom in spring as soon as they finish flowering.

If you have not done it already, check stored tools and outdoor furniture for signs of rust. Remove any surface rust with steel wool and paint with rust preventing paint.

Turn the compost pile.

Start transplants indoors of tomatoes, peppers and eggplant.

Rake the lawn to remove leaves and twigs.

Some annuals, such as verbemas, snapdragons and petunias, take 70–90 days to bloom. They should be started indoors in early spring.

Buy some new perennials for your flower border. Spring is a good time to renew and add variety to your landscape.

If your house plants are not growing well, check all five growing factors. Light, temperature, nutrients, moisture and humidity must be favorable to provide good growth.

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