

Article for Garden Myths Partner Program

Date: Sept 2017

Title:

Garden Myth: Moth Balls are Good for Controlling Squirrels

Research has not shown that mothballs are effective at getting squirrels to leave the area, provided that they don't have babies in the nest. The problem is that mothballs are also toxic to many life forms, including humans.

Mothballs contain either naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene. These chemicals easily turn from a solid into a gas, which explains their smell. They are a pesticide that is controlled by the EPA and can legally only be used if you follow instructions on the label. They are labeled only for use in closed containers for the control of moths. Any other use, like spreading them around your garden, is illegal.

When used in the garden, they present a danger to children, pets and other wildlife. Exposure to large quantities of naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene can lead to headaches, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Exposure for extended periods can cause more serious effects like liver and kidney damage.

In the US a commercial product containing naphthalene and sulfur is labeled for outdoor use and can be used to repel rodents, snakes, raccoons, skunks, squirrels, bats, woodpeckers and others. For most situations, this product is not very effective.

Squirrels are difficult to control because they move easily from one area to another. Removing the ones on your property will just encourage neighboring squirrels to move to your yard. The best option is to learn to live with them.

Further Reading

Tree Squirrels; <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74122.html>

Written by Robert Pavlis, author of two books, [Garden Myths](#) and [Building Natural Ponds](#).

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