

Canada Geese – What a Nuisance!

They live for up to 24 years, build nests up to 4 feet across and mate for life. They also eat up to 4 lbs of grass and deposit about 2 lbs of fecal matter daily. And every now and then these creatures become a nuisance to waterfront property owners.

They are Canada geese, animals that were once in danger of being hunted to extinction, but are now thriving under the conditions that human development provides.

The problem with Canada geese...

Evolutionary, Canada geese are tundra nesters. They prefer areas with low vegetation adjacent to open water; conditions that are found all too often in urban areas where geese congregate and cause a variety of problems.

The problems associated with high concentrations of geese include safety hazards, damage to property, increased incidence of swimmer's itch, and aesthetic and health issues associated with goose droppings and elevated bacteria levels.

Feeding geese allows them to become accustomed to human contact and results in aggressive behaviour toward people, especially when defending their nesting territory. It is unnecessary to feed geese as there are ample natural sources of food for them.

To fix the problem...

The best way to control nuisance geese is to avoid encouraging them to the area in the first place. The next best course of action is to discourage them from staying as soon as they arrive and to be persistent in whatever action you choose to take.

Understanding why geese choose your property to feed and nest is the key to preventing them from staying. Canada geese are attracted to areas that provide food (in the form of highly fertilized and watered young grass shoots), water (in the form of a pond or lake) and protection (in the form of clear sightlines to detect predators and easy access to the water, where they are able to escape danger more quickly).

The easiest methods available to homeowners for controlling nuisance geese populations are scare tactics and habitat modification.

Scare tactics

Begin scare tactics as soon as the geese arrive on your property and be persistent. Visual repellents include large flags, trash bags, helium balloons, and Mylar tape. Your devices should be moved every two to three days to prevent habituation.

Loud noises from a variety of sources can also be effective at frightening geese. Sources include propane exploders, air horns, and sirens. Bangers and screamers are most effective at dusk.



A combination of visual repellents and loud noises should be used. Change tactics often to prevent the geese from getting used to any one of them.

Another effective scare tactic is to use dogs trained to disturb geese causing them to leave.

Habitat modification

Habitat modification is the most successful approach in dealing with nuisance geese. Create or restore conditions on your property so they are unfavourable for goose habitat.

Canada geese avoid feeding, nesting and gathering in areas where tall vegetation blocks their view of the surrounding area and their escape routes. Allow the vegetation along your shoreline or around your pond to grow to at least 60 cm high and be dense enough to keep the geese from seeing through it (at least 7.5 m wide).

A narrow S-shaped path allows people to access the water's edge without being noticeable to the geese.

Allow your vegetation to grow taller. Plant trees and shrubs to block sightlines and prevent geese from flying onto your property. Boulders over two feet in diameter can be placed along the shoreline to limit water-land access.

Changing your lawn maintenance practices can deter Canada geese from using your property as a feeding area. Reduce your fertilizer use to make grass less tasty and nutritious for the geese.

It is also helpful to replace tasty Kentucky bluegrass turf with less palatable grasses like native ryes and fescues to prevent geese from using your property.

Encourage shore habitats that do not make it easy for geese to move from water to shore.

Environmental degradation

Canada geese are thriving in large part because of the landscape changes brought on by human development. Exploding Canada goose populations serve as a visible indicator of the environmental degradation often associated with the creation of large expanses of manicured lawns and green spaces. Nuisance Canada geese are a symptom – not the problem.

If you experience problems with Canada geese, consider changing your landscape to make it less favourable for geese and more hospitable for other wildlife.

