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## *Environment, Gardening & Land Use*

### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

Avoid Uninvited  
Fall House Guests

Resources For  
Woodlot Owners

Winter Composting

**INSERT**  
Table of Firewood

### **EDITORS**

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*Happy Holidays!*



### ***Avoid Uninvited Fall House Guests***

Submitted by John Farfaglia

The fall season is the time of year when many of us find ourselves with uninvited guests in the home. They include various insects, but the pests I want to discuss here are the small, furry rodents. These include mice, voles, shrews, and perhaps even a mole or two. These little animals are in search of both food and shelter for the coming colder months, which is why they are particularly bothersome during the fall.

Knowing that this is the time of year these creatures will begin to move indoors, you can take steps to try and avoid them becoming wintertime residents in the home. I'll discuss two of these rodents here.

The house mouse is probably the most common of the rodent guests. They are small, grayish-brown or black creatures about three to five inches long, with a gray or buff belly and a nearly hairless tail, with fairly prominent eyes and ears and a pointed nose. The house mouse usually lives in close proximity to homes and barns or commercial structures, and with the onset of cold weather, they try to move into more comfortable quarters, usually a heated structure.

The **house mouse** prefers seeds and grains, but is a browser, nibbling on whatever food happens to be available. It is this nibbling characteristic of theirs that causes so much damage. It isn't that they eat a lot, but that they eat a little of everything, and, therefore, cause widespread contamination. They seem to prefer foods that are high in fats and sugars, such as bacon and chocolate and they are very fond of dog, cat and, bird food, probably because these foods contain fats, proteins, and sugars. They will also damage containers and food packaging and can also cause structural

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damage by gnawing on insulation, plastics, electrical wiring, and such. The house mouse can be especially destructive to stored items such as books, clothing, and heirlooms. It can also be a carrier of disease and parasites that can be transmitted to humans, such as salmonellosis, ringworm, and tapeworms.

The **white-footed deer mouse** is a close relative of the house mouse. This rodent has a brownish black and white belly with white feet, thus its name. They have larger eyes and ears and are generally considered to be cuter than the house mouse. They prefer wooded or bushy areas, so are less likely to be found in more built up or residential areas. However, they too will venture into the house as cold weather arrives.

The deer mouse will also chew on and gather all types of material for making their nests, including plastics, cloth, insulation, and paper. They eat a wide variety of foods and will snack on just about anything they can find.

In addition to being transmitters of diseases like the house mouse, the deer mouse can also be a carrier of deer ticks, which can transmit Lyme disease.

Both house mice and deer mice are nocturnal in habit, though they may occasionally be seen during the day. They are wary creatures, extremely agile, and can move quickly and jump from heights without harm. Generally, the same control methods will apply to both house and deer mice.

### **Management**

First, attempt to rodent-proof your home or building. Using hardware cloth, cement, or flashing to block all entrances is a start. These little animals can get through a hole the size of a dime, so it is important to be thorough in blocking up even the smallest crack or crevice.

Check for openings around drain pipes, electrical and water lines, and the dryer vent.



Second, use good sanitation practices by storing all foods in rodent-proof containers and keeping the area free of food scraps

and crumbs. This includes left-overs in the dog and cat dishes. After they have eaten, clean up their left over food.

Third, consider using baits or snap traps to reduce or eliminate the rodents which find their way into the home. Bait traps with a very small amount of peanut butter. In fact, bait it and then wipe off the bait pad. This will prevent the rodent from licking off the bait and not springing the trap. Make them work for the bait. Using poison rodent baits is also effective, but may take some time, a lot of bait, and there is always a chance the poisoned rodent may die in the house or worse yet, wall. Be sure baits are not accessible to small children or pets. Be sure to read the label and follow directions. In truly severe infestations, you may want to consult a professional pest control service, found in the yellow pages.

Plan now to avoid rodent problems later this fall and winter. Source: Joel W. Allen, Extension Educator, CCE Columbia County, The NEWS, November 2005

### ***Resources For Woodlot Owners or Those Who Want To Improve Habitat In Abandoned Ag Land***

Submitted by Paul E. Lehman

If you don't use the internet, Cornell Cooperative Extension can help you get information at the sites listed.

1. [www.ForestConnect.info](http://www.ForestConnect.info) has a wide variety and volume of articles and links that will help people get started.
2. [www.nraes.org](http://www.nraes.org) item #170 is a recent publication from entitled "Forest Resources Management: A Landowner's Guide to Getting Started." This is a workbook format that helps guide a forest owner through the process of understanding their objectives, understanding how their forest functions, and what resources are available to help them manage their property. Check also NRAES #184, a recent publication similar to 170 designed for smaller acreage (less than 15).
3. Connect with a Master Forest Owner volunteer in your or an adjacent county. The list of MFO volunteers is at [www.CornellMFO.info](http://www.CornellMFO.info) MFO volunteers make non-technical free visits to help other forest owners understand their options and resources.

4. Join the New York Forest Owners Association ([www.nyfoa.org](http://www.nyfoa.org)) to receive their bi-monthly magazine "Forest Owner" and gain access to a variety of woods walks and seminars.
5. Encourage them to subscribe to the recent announcement for the ForestConnect Letter Series. This is a 6-part letter series that was recently announced (it should look and sound really familiar) with a press release. More information is at [www.ForestConnect.info](http://www.ForestConnect.info)
6. The NYS DEC regional offices can provide free on-site technical assistance through their public service forester program. DEC foresters will prepare a forest stewardship plan upon request from a land owner. Private sector foresters are available (DEC maintains a list) but CCE should supply owners with the article on "Working with Foresters" available at the website via: <http://www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/info/pubs/Stewardshipmanual/10working%20with%20Foresters.pdf> (big file takes a while to load)
7. A monthly series of web conferences to provide presentations for forest owners is underway. This will be using Adobe Connect via Breeze interface. People need to register from the homepage at [www.ForestConnect.info](http://www.ForestConnect.info) to receive email announcements of the dates and topics. Source: information provided by Dr. Peter Smallidge of Cornell University

### **Winter Composting**

Submitted by John Farfaglia

Continue composting throughout the year, despite winter winds, dropping temperatures and snow. Although the decomposition process usually slows down in cooler weather, compost piles will keep working all year long. Residents of your pile, like bacteria, molds, mites and actinomycetes can survive the cold. However, to prolong their active life over the winter, they will need warmth, food, air, and moisture. Follow the tips in this fact sheet to optimize your composting in winter months and welcome spring with a productive, healthy compost pile.

#### **Late Fall Preparations**

Collect bags of dry leaves from your lawn and your neighbors. Stockpile excess dry leaves in large plastic garbage bags or

covered garbage cans for use throughout the year. Harvest finished compost from your pile to make room for your winter additions. Since the decomposition process is slower in the winter, you may need the extra room. Use the finished compost in your garden or store it in a dry place for the spring.

#### **Over The Course Of The Winter**

1. Continue layering "browns" and "greens" – Adding a lot of compostable material to your pile will shield the critters responsible for decomposition from the elements. Garden waste, spent perennials, sod, and – of course – the ubiquitous fall leaves are good, abundant choices in autumn. It is always best to layer greens (kitchen scraps, fresh garden waste) with browns (dead leaves, straw, newspaper). This ensures the right ratio of carbon to nitrogen, helps aerate and provides adequate drainage in the pile...all of which contributes to next spring's harvest of "black gold". Turning the pile in the winter is not necessary, since it may result in a loss of heat from the middle of the pile.
2. Insulate your bin or build a wind break – insulating your bin will protect it from the harsh winter winds and cold. While the outside of your bin may freeze, the inside can still "cook". If you find yourself with an overabundance of leaves, pile them on! As you produce greens (kitchen scraps) over the winter, tuck them in under the insulating layer. You can provide extra insulation by surrounding your bin with black bags of leaves or straw/hay bales. Or try creating a windbreak with a tarp.
3. Maintain a "pre-compost" bucket – to reduce your cold winter trips to your bin, start a pre-compost bucket. You can use an empty bucket or trashcan in which you place your kitchen scraps. However, be sure to layer them with adequate browns to prevent smells. Add these materials to your outdoor bin whenever convenient or before your pre-compost bin gets too heavy.
4. Reduce particle size of browns and greens – the cold weather slows down the compost process. Smaller particle sizes of greens and browns provide more surface area to speed decomposition. Set up a cutting board for compost and chop up your food scraps before putting them in the bin. Leaves can be shredded with a lawn mower or trimmer.

**Early Spring Maintenance**

If your pile should freeze over the winter, it will return to active duty once thawed. Once it does, you will be happy that you took the time to layer your greens with browns. One common mistake is to pile all the winter's

kitchen scraps onto your pile without layering or mixing in browns. All-greens piles are almost always stinky! If your pile is excessively wet due to the spring thaw, turn it and add more browns to soak up this moisture.



*Happy  
Holidays!*

**Table of Firewood**

Species	Type of Wood	Amount of Heat	Aroma	Sparks	Heavy Smoke	Pounds Per Cord (Air Dry)	Heat Per Cord Mil. BTU	Moist Cont. Green Wood	General Remarks
Alder	Hard	Low	Slight	Few	No	2300	11	90	Fair
Apple	Fruit	High	Excellent	Few	No	3900	27	80	Excellent
Ash, black	Hard	High	Slight	Few	No	2900	20	95	Good
Ash, white	Hard	High	Slight	Few	No	3400	23	45	Excellent
Aspen	Hard	Low	Slight	Few	Medium	2100	15	95	Fair
Avocado	Fruit	Low	Slight	Few	No	2100	15	--	Fair
Basswood	Hard	Low	Slight	Few	Medium	2100	15	90	Fair
Beech	Hard	High	Slight	Few	No	3900	27	60	Excellent
Birch, black	Hard	High	Slight	Moderate	No	3900	27	75	Excellent
Birch, gray	Hard	High	Slight	Moderate	No	2900	30	75	Good
Birch, white	Hard	High	Slight	Moderate	No	2900	20	75	Good
Birch, yellow	Hard	High	Slight	Moderate	No	3400	23	75	Excellent
Box elder	Hard	Medium	Slight	Few	No	2300	11	--	Fair
Butternut	Hard	Medium	Slight	Few	No	2100	15	--	Fair
Catalpa	Hard	Low	Slight	Few	No	1600	11	--	Poor
Cedar, red	Soft	Medium	Good	Many	Medium	2900	20	--	Good
Cedar, white	Soft	Medium	Good	Many	Medium	2100	15	--	Fair
Cherry	Fruit	Medium	Excellent	Few	No	2800	20	60	Good
Chestnut	Hard	Medium	Slight	Many	Medium	2500	18	120	Poor
Citrus	Fruit	High	Excellent	Few	No	3700	25	--	Excellent
Cottonwood	Hard	Low	Slight	Few	Medium	2100	15	150	Fair
Cypress	Soft	Low	Fair	Few	Medium	2300	11	--	Fair
Dogwood	Hard	High	Fair	Few	No	3900	27	--	Excellent
Elm	Hard	Medium	Slight	Few	Medium	3000	20	95	Fair
Eucalyptus	Hard	Medium	Pungent	Many	Medium	2400	17	95	Fair
Fir, Balsam	Soft	Low	Slight	Moderate	Medium	2100	15	--	Fair
Fir, Douglas	Soft	Medium	Slight	Few	Yes	2500	28	--	Good
Fir, True	Soft	Medium	Slight	Few	Medium	2200	16	--	Fair
Gum	Hard	Medium	Slight	Few	Medium	2900	20	--	Fair
Hackberry	Hard	Medium	Slight	Few	No	2900	26	61	Fair
Hemlock	Soft	Medium	Good	Few	Medium	2100	15	--	Fair
Hickory	Hard	High	Slight	Moderate	No	3900	27	70	Excellent
Hop. Hornbeam	Hard	High	Slight	Few	No	3900	27	--	Excellent
Ironwood	Hard	High	Slight	Few	No	4400	30	--	Excellent
Juniper	Soft	Medium	Good	Moderate	Medium	2700	15	--	Fair
Larch	Soft	Medium	Good	Many	Medium	2900	20	--	Fair
Locust	Hard	High	Slight	Few	No	3900	27	--	Excellent
Magnolia	Hard	Fair	Medium	Few	No	2900	20	90	Good
Maple, hard	Hard	High	Good	Few	No	3800	26	65	Excellent
Maple, soft	Hard	Medium	Slight	Few	No	3200	19	60	Good
Mulberry	Fruit	Medium	Good	Few	No	3400	23	--	Good
Oak, black	Hard	High	Fair	Few	No	3600	24	75	Excellent
Oak, white	Hard	High	Fair	Few	No	3900	27	65	Excellent
Osage, orange	Hard	High	Slight	Few	No	4200	29	--	Excellent
Peach	Fruit	Medium	Excellent	Few	No	2800	26	--	Good
Pear	Fruit	High	Excellent	Few	No	3800	26	--	Excellent
Pecan	Hard	High	Slight	Few	No	3800	26	--	Excellent
Persimmon	Fruit	High	Good	Few	No	3900	27	--	Excellent
Pine, Ponderosa	Soft	Low	Excellent	Many	Medium	2600	19	--	Fair
Pine, Sugar	Soft	Low	Excellent	Many	Medium	2700	12	--	Fair
Pine, white	Soft	Low	Excellent	Many	Medium	2100	13	--	Fair
Pine, yellow	Soft	Low	Excellent	Many	Yes	2900	20	--	Good
Pinyon	Soft	Medium	Fair	Moderate	Yes	2800	16	--	Good
Plum	Fruit	High	Excellent	Few	No	3900	27	--	Excellent
Poplar	Hard	Low	Slight	Many	Medium	2100	15	--	Poor
Redwood	Soft	Low	Slight	Many	Medium	2200	11	--	Fair
Sassafras	Hard	Medium	Excellent	Few	No	2900	20	--	Good
Spruce	Soft	Medium	Good	Many	Medium	2100	16	--	Fair
Sycamore	Hard	Medium	Slight	Few	Medium	2900	20	115	Fair
Walnut	Hard	High	Good	Few	No	3400	23	90	Good
Willow	Hard	Low	Slight	Few	No	2100	14	--	Fair

