



# How to Get Rid of Animal Pests With Hot Pepper Spray

Most gardeners love observing animals, but few want animals in their garden eating their treasured plants. This spray is made from hot peppers of the genus *Capsicum*—this spray is effective because it contains capsaicin. To us, this constituent gives food we add it to a hot sensation but for many animals (especially mammals), it's a repellent. Here is how to make it.

## Steps

- 1 Understand how the spray works.** Hot peppers have a compound in them called capsaicin. Mammals are sensitive to capsaicin, and the compound registers on their taste buds as "hot" and serves as an irritant. This spray is considered to be effective for such garden animal pests as deer, rabbits, voles, squirrels, possums and insects.
- 2 Take one quart (950ml) of water and put it in a pot.**
- 3 Take one-half cup of dried hot peppers (available at most Asian groceries), and put them in the pot.**
- 4 Bring the pot of water and peppers to just barely boiling.** Then turn off the heat and let it cool to room temperature.
- 5 Strain out the peppers and throw them away.**
- 6 Put the liquid into a spray bottle.** Label it so that anyone coming across it knows what the contents are; it's also a good idea to add the date to it.
  - For added sticking power, you might like to add a few drops of pure dish soap to the liquid as well.
- 7 Spray it on the plants you want to protect.** Always wear gloves and eye protection before using this spray—it can burn your skin and eyes if it touches them and it's painful. Be sure to spray the entire plant, for full protection.
  - Shake before using.
  - Use the spray early morning or in the evening—if sprayed in the heat of the day, it may burn the plants.<sup>[1]</sup>
  - If you're not sure how sensitive plants will cope, test a small area first. Wait four days and if the plant doesn't react, then using the spray on it should be okay.<sup>[1]</sup>
  - Do not spray this on windy days. The back spray may hit you or go anywhere but on the plants you're trying to protect.
  - As mentioned earlier, do not spray anywhere near waterways, lakes or ponds.
- 8 Re-spray every week for maximum benefit.** It will also need to be reapplied after rain.

## Community Q&A

Does this pepper spray work on rats?



No. But peppermint oil does! Just a few drops will be sufficient to make the rats disappear.

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I added cayenne pepper to water and both sprayers seized up when I sprayed it. Why? And what can I do to prevent that?

wikiHow  
Contributor

I learned this the hard way also. Any kind of powder will clog up a sprayer. It's best to use large pepper flakes, cook them as specified here, then strain them with a fine mesh strainer. Cheesecloth inside the strainer prevents small particles from leaching through.

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### Squirrels are chewing on my wood porch and steps. Will this spray help with this problem?

wikiHow  
Contributor

It should repel all rodents, including squirrels. When sprayed on a non-organic surface it may come off more easily and is almost guaranteed to wash off when it's raining, so you'll have to apply it more frequently. Because you will be walking on the steps, make sure that you don't accidentally get it in your eyes (it sounds odd, but it's amazing how substances can get from one surface to another so easily, eventually getting into the worst places).

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### Is there a difference in dried hot peppers and crushed red pepper? I am a bit confused as I bought a package of crushed chili peppers which look like the peppers in the above photo, but is there a difference between dried and crushed?

wikiHow  
Contributor

No difference. Just that they are the dried version of the fresh ones. First soak for 30 minutes and then follow the same process.

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### Tips

- The spray will need to be re-applied approximately every week, and after it rains.
- This spray should also be a help in deterring dogs and cats that are relieving themselves near favorite plants.
- Fresh hot peppers will also work. Mincing them and letting them soak for at least a day will produce the best results.<sup>[1]</sup>
- Hot pepper spray will also deter some insect pests, such as flea beetles and aphids.
- Birds are not sensitive to capsaicin. Many birds will still eat bird seed that has been "squirrel-proofed" by being dusted with hot pepper powder. However, it is possible that the powdered form impacts some birds; just don't rely on it as your main anti-bird method.

## Warnings

- Do not get the hot pepper spray in your eyes, or on your skin. It really hurts.
- Avoid relying on this as the only method for deterring animal pests from your garden. Mend broken fences and holes in fences; keep gates shut; keep pet food indoors to avoid easy feasting; keep garbage contained and clean; fence off vegetable gardens; use bird netting and other physical barriers as well.
- If you're spraying vegetables, you'll either have to stop spraying when the vegetables are close to ripening, or wash the harvested vegetables well.
- Never spray directly at an animal—this is for plant use only.
- Do not use this spray near waterways, lakes or ponds. The effect on aquatic life is unknown and it may harm your backyard fish.
- Capsaicin is extremely toxic to bees and other beneficial pollinators, if your garden depends on them consider using a different repellent. <sup>[2]</sup>

## Things You'll Need

- A pot (1-1/2 - 2 quart size)
- 1/2 cup of dried hot peppers
- 1 quart/950ml water
- Strainer
- Spray bottle

## Sources and Citations

1. <sup>↑</sup> <sup>1.01.11.2</sup><http://organicgardeningweb.com/Recipe%20book/Pesticide%20Recipes/Hot%20Pepper.htm>
2. <http://npic.orst.edu/factsheets/Capgen.pdf>

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