

ARMADILLOS IN YOUR YARD?

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Many yards are invaded nightly in our area by curious 8-17 pound armored mammals. A relatively recent addition to our Florida fauna, the armadillo is found throughout most of our area. While the armadillo is an interesting animal, its habit of digging holes in lawns, flowerbeds, and gardens in search of food can be very frustrating to homeowners. Controlling the damage caused by these mammals can be a bit tricky at best. What can you do to minimize the impact from armadillos?

First, do you actually have an armadillo problem? Holes caused by armadillos are generally 1-3 inches in depth and 3-5 inches wide. Armadillos dig as they search for food items such as earthworms, scorpions, spiders, snails, army-

worms, cockroaches, ants, and grasshoppers. Sometimes mushrooms and berries are eaten. There have even been cases of armadillos digging up yellow-jacket nests. Some of this activity can actually be beneficial. But, when flowers and ornamentals are uprooted, or burrowing under driveways and patios causes structural damage, some attention is needed to curtail this behavior. There are several options to consider. All of these management options have their limitations.

One cultural method to consider is to reduce water and fertilizer applications to your lawn. While minimum inputs as far as water and nutrients is concerned must be considered, keep in mind

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that an overly moist landscape is a perfect place for earthworms and insect larvae - tasty fare for armadillos! Small fences in certain areas may also help. A fence at least two feet tall and buried 18 inches into the ground will work. Slant the fence outward at a 40 degree angle for best results. Chicken wire can be laid down along the side of a driveway or patio to discourage burrowing. Live traps are another option. However, as it is illegal to transport and release armadillos elsewhere, it may be advisable to secure the services of a properly licensed wildlife nuisance control company (making sure that they have insurance and references) to do this work for you. There are no chemical repellants regis-

tered in Florida to repel armadillos.

As I mentioned before, controlling the damage caused by armadillos can be difficult. Using some combination of the above suggestions may offer some relief. Take heart that armadillo damage will be temporary! Remember that you can't control the whole world's population of armadillos. These curious animals tend to disperse as the rainy season approaches.

Resources:

- Schaefer, J.M. & Hostetler, M.E. (2003), *The Nine-banded Armadillo*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.

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For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Turner, at 764.4351 or email Allison.Turner@CharlotteFL.com. Allison can help educate you about the FYN Program so you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.

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