

Living In



Bear Country

Bears are very opportunistic and eat basically everything that humans and their pets and livestock do. The following is a breakdown of typical bear attractants and what you can do to avoid inviting a bear to your home.

Some Garbage Care Tips

- To decrease odors, store garbage in tightly tied, heavy duty bags.
- Store garbage in “bear resistant” dumpsters or garbage cans.
- If a bear-proof container is not available, store garbage inside until it can be taken to a refuse site.
- Take advantage of regular trash pickup services. Don’t stockpile your garbage—it will begin to smell and may attract a bear.
- Store extra smelly items like fish parts and meat bones in a freezer until they can be taken to a refuse site.

Other Useful Tips

- **Bird Feeders**—Only place as much bird feed in the feeder as birds can consume in a few hours, there will be less spillage on the ground and less waste.
- **Hummingbird Feeders**—Bring in at night.
- **Dog Food**—It is always best to feed dogs inside. Feed only that amount that your dog can consume at one time.
- **Horse Grain & Cubes**—Store all grain and cubes in bear resistant containers, sheds or structures. When feeding, feed only what your horse can consume at one time.
- **BBQ’s**—Keep clean and in a garage or shed when not in use.
- **Orchards**—Clean up fallen fruit immediately—don’t allow fruit to rot on the ground.
- **Compost piles**—Composting of anything other than grass or leaves is not recommended.
- **Gardens**—Avoid growing aromatic vegetables, fruits or herbs. Root crops are best but can still attract the interest of a hungry bear.

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208-267-4085
208-267-3115 (alt.)
208-267-7629 (alt.)

Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/wildlife/igbc/>

Living with Wildlife Foundation:

<http://www.lwwf.org/>

Center for Wildlife Information

<http://www.centerforwildlifeinformation.org/index.html>

No matter where we live in bear country we're never far from bears, spectacular animals that, unfortunately, can get into trouble with humans. Homeowners, remember that bears have an extremely good sense of smell and will check out anything that smells like food. They also have good memories—once “rewarded” with food, a bear will seek out similar situations and return with regularity to sites where they once got a free meal. The best approach is to “bear-proof” your property by storing food, garbage and other attractants away from bears.



Electric fences (the more strands the better) have been used successfully in a variety of circumstances where bears are attempting to access human foods or garbage. Properly constructed fences can deter bears from attractants including garbage storing facilities, beehives, orchards, gardens and even sewage lagoons. Electric fences are relatively inexpensive to install but take regular maintenance. It is not recommended that electric fences be used around human dwellings, as some bears have been known to jump or push their way through an electric fence when startled by the electric shock.



Stored garbage often attracts bears. Once a bear uses human garbage as food, it is very difficult to persuade the bear to leave the area. Bears that are drawn to stored garbage but are unable to obtain feed will usually leave and not return.

Bears are intelligent creatures. It doesn't take long for a bear to realize that improperly stored garbage is an easy source of food. The pattern of events is predictable: A bear feeds on garbage and people enjoy the spectacle. After a few visits, the bear loses its fear of humans because the lure of garbage is greater than its natural tendency to avoid people. When the bear no longer fears humans, the potential for conflicts greatly increases.

“Garbage bears” are often killed because it is the only practical option available. Transported bears often return from great distances to their home territory, and those that don't return take their raiding habits with them to new areas. The adage that “A Fed Bear is a Dead Bear” is usually true.

Chain link has been used to successfully keep bears out of landfills, sewage treatment areas, and trash collection centers. Chain link fence alone has been successfully used in areas of low bear concentrations and where bears have not been exposed to food sources. Occasionally, bears have dug under or climbed over fences to reach food sources. It is recommended that the chain link fence be buried three feet in the ground. A concrete pad under the gate may be necessary.

Shed construction should consist of a material strong enough to prevent the bear from chewing through it, and be fitted snug enough to prevent the bear from getting their claws underneath the material. Bears are very strong and have been known to tear siding off when they have been able to get their claws underneath it. Good bets for wall materials are concrete block, bricks, steel siding, or heavy wooden siding.

