

Amherst Garden Club October 2022

Celebrate the Halloween Season with Spooky Garden Helpers- Bats, Snakes & Spiders!

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Many gardeners enjoy the benefits of Bats, Snakes, and Spiders in their gardens. How can we help these creatures stay safe and thrive in our environment? **A few easy tips will keep these friendly garden allies happy in your yard and neighborhood.**

BATS

Bats control insects, especially disease causing mosquitoes.

New Hampshire has 8 native bat species, all of which are of conservation concern, and 4 are endangered species in our state. Habitat loss, poisoning, and fungal disease threaten all bat species in our area.

How can we help BATS?

- During the summer months, bats are actively feeding each night. They drink water by swooping across bodies of water, as well as birdbaths. **Providing a clean birdbath** with space for them to swoop in for a sip is helpful.
- **Try using natural insect pesticides**, to help bats avoid being poisoned by certain pesticides used in landscapes.
- **Consider putting a bat house on your property.** Bat houses are available in many garden centers and online. Choose one made specifically for bat roosting. Placement is important. Bat houses can be mounted on wooden posts, steel poles, pivot poles, or on the sides of buildings, but should not be mounted on trees for three reasons:
 1. They receive less sun among the branches
 2. Bat tenants are more vulnerable to predators sitting in trees

3. Obstructions in the form of branches and surrounding vegetation make it more difficult for bats to drop into flight.

SNAKES

Snakes keep slug, grasshopper, and rodent populations in check, including voles that destroy fruit trees.

New Hampshire has 11 native snake species, and 5 are considered in need of conservation.

If you need help identifying a snake species, you may email photos to the NH Fish and Game Department for this free service.

How can we help SNAKES?

- **Leave some small areas of fallen logs, or a woodpile** of any size, on your property, where snakes can rest and hide.
- **Avoid systemic rodent poisons**, which can kill snakes and also, hawks, eagles, turkey vultures, foxes, bobcats, and other animals which prey on rodents.
- **Walk your lawn just before mowing**, so snakes can retreat to safety. This can be done while picking up fallen branches, toys, and other lawn obstacles.

SPIDERS

Spiders help control ants, roaches and other unwanted insects in our homes and gardens. They prey on many insect garden pests: Aphids, leafhoppers, leafminers, spider mites, caterpillars, thrips, plant bugs, cucumber beetles, grasshoppers, and flies.

Some insect pests are actually known to abandon an area once spiders move in (Thank you to the [Mecklenberg County Master Gardeners](#), North Carolina Cooperative Extension for sharing this information).

Birds benefit by spiders, not only are they an important food source for many bird species, but their web silk is used in construction of hummingbird nests. The

silk is strong yet flexible, and prized by hummingbirds in nesting season. Other bird species, use spider egg sacs in their nests to control mites. They place the spider egg sacs below their eggs and when the spiderlings emerge they rid the nest of harmful mites.

New Hampshire has approximately 36 native spider species, most are common to Southern NH environments.

How can we help SPIDERS?

- **Allow some spider webs in areas in your gardens.** Web weaving species appreciate tall plants, such as foxgloves, delphinium, sunflowers, and dahlias to establish their webs.
- **Wear garden gloves when pulling back mulch,** as many spiders rest to stay cool under bark mulch. When you disturb them during gardening tasks, let them go on their way.
- **Consider not destroying them,** when possible, to serve as natural pest control in your garden beds.

Resource Lists:

BATS

General Information <https://extension.unh.edu/resource/bats-new-hampshire>

Installing proper bat houses <https://batweek.org/install-bat-house/>

SNAKES

General information and Identification <https://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/nongame/snakes.html>

Garter Snakes in NH

<https://www.nhpr.org/something-wild/2017-04-21/something-wild-garter-snakes>

SPIDERS

Spiders of NH picture identification <https://spideridentifications.com/spiders-in-us/spiders-in-new-hampshire>

<https://nestwatch.org/connect/blog/along-came-a-spider/>